







*Jane Keble*

THE

# POLITE LADY:

OR, A COURSE OF

*Portia*

FEMALE EDUCATION.

IN A

SERIES of LETTERS,

From a MOTHER to her DAUGHTER.

'Tis Education forms the tender Mind,  
Just as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclin'd.

POPE.

FOURTH EDITION.

*(His Religion that must give  
Sweetest pleasure will be mine)*

D U B L I N:

Printed by JOHN EXSHAW, in Dame-Street.

M.DCC.LXXIX.

THE  
POLITICAL

OF A

EDUCATION

IN A

SERIES OF



FOR THE

D. U. B. M.

RECEIVED

TO THE  
GOVERNESSES  
OF  
LADIES' Boarding Schools  
IN  
GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND,  
THE FOLLOWING  
LETTERS  
UPON  
FEMALE EDUCATION  
ARE,

With the greatest deference and respect,

INSCRIBED

BY THEIR

Most humble and obedient servant,

THE EDITOR.



THE

GOVERNMENT

OF

Massachusetts

is

Ordered by the Senate and House of Representatives

that the following

REPORT

OF

THE BOARD OF

EDUCATION

FOR THE YEAR 1888

BEFORE THE

SENATE

AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OF MASSACHUSETTS

1889

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**S**HOULD any one be curious enough to inquire, why the following letters (which were originally written for the private instruction of a daughter) are now offered to the public, the author has only this to answer, that, as they had contributed, in a great measure, to form the character of a young lady, who not only in the partial opinion of a fond parent, but even in the impartial judgment of the world, is allowed to be one of the most accomplished women of the age, she was desirous of putting them into the hands of her younger daughters,

vi    A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

daughters, which could not be so conveniently done in manuscript, as in print.

Besides, she was made to believe, that they might be of some little use to the female sex in general ; because, though all mothers were as willing, and many were more capable than her to direct the education and form the manners of their daughters, yet that few had so much leisure to digest their instructions into a regular method. By this, however, she does not mean to insinuate, that she has been strictly methodical : she is sensible she has not ; though, she flatters herself, she has been sufficiently so to avoid all perplexity and confusion.

Nor does she pretend to have exhausted the subject, or to have laid down such a perfect plan of female education, as will exactly suit the temper and capacities of all young ladies ; these are so infinitely various and different, that no single plan, however comprehensive, can possibly answer the purpose. 'Tis the duty of every  
mother

## ADVERTISEMENT. vii

mother to insist particularly on the acquisition of those accomplishments, which are most suitable to her daughter's rank and station, and on the correction of those foibles, to which she is naturally most inclined.

For this reason it is, that the author of these letters has been more diffuse on some subjects, and more concise on others, than, without this distinction, might seem to be proper. But, though she has endeavoured to adapt her instructions to the capacity of the young lady, to whom they were, at first, addressed, yet she imagines, that, by a little variation, they may be easily accommodated to that of any other.

In a word, she has attempted, according to her weak abilities, to recommend the study and practice of all those virtues and good qualities, which, in her opinion, constitute the character of a polite and accomplished lady; and, if, in this attempt, she escape censure, she does not aspire to fame. From the former, she hopes, the  
indulgence,



viii ADVERTISEMENT.

indulgence, which the good-natured part of the world have ever shewn to the female sex, will, in some measure, protect her; and to the latter, she is not vain enough (though a woman) to think she has any just pretence.

THE

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THE  
POLITE LADY.

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LETTER I.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

WHILE you lived under my immediate care and inspection, I endeavoured to set before you a good example, and to instil into your tender mind such maxims of virtue and prudence, as were suitable to your age and capacity.—But, now that you are settled in Mrs. Bromley's boarding-school, I can no longer follow this method of instruction. However, what I cannot perform in person, I will endeavour to supply by letters. For, though you are removed out of my sight, you are not, for all that, banished from my thoughts. On the contrary, you are more in them now than ever. I feel my concern for your

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happiness



happinefs rather increafed than diminished by abfence; and I confefs, that nothing in this world would give me fo much pleafure, as to fee you, one day, prove an accomplifhed woman. To enable you to become fuch, no advantages of education fhall be wanting. Mrs. Bromley is a woman of fuch approved abilities and fidelity, that there is no danger of any neglect on her part; and the beft advice and direCTIONS I can give, you fhall receive in a feries of letters, which I propofe to write to you from time to time; and, I hope, I fhall have the pleafure of feeing the good effect they have upon you, by your daily improvement in knowledge and virtue.

First of all then, my dear Sophy, let me advife you to obey Mrs. Bromley in every thing ſhe commands. She is a gentlewoman of fo much good fenfe, that ſhe will defire you to do nothing but what is reasonable; and, I know, ſhe will explain to you the reafonableneſs of all her injunctions, where you are able to comprehend it; and, where you are not, you muſt take it for granted, that they are for your real intereſt and advantage. In a word, you muſt behave to her with all the reſpect and obedience of a child; as, I am confident, ſhe will treat you with all the affection and tenderneſs of a parent. Your next care muſt be to procure the love and eſteem of your ſchool-fellows, by an inoffenſive and obliging behaviour. Hurt nobody; ſpeak ill of nobody; tell no lies of any body; but do to every one all the kind and civil offices you can. Lying, indeed, is a vice I never found you guilty of; and, I believe, I might have ſpared my advice on that head.

But

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But there is another vice, against which I would caution you, I mean tale-bearing: not that I ever perceived you more inclined to this vice than any other, but because you will now, perhaps, be under stronger temptations to the commission of it; and because, of all others, it will render you most odious to your companions. The nature and limitations of this vice I shall explain to you more fully in some succeeding letter, when you will be more capable of understanding me. As many of your companions are much older than you, and farther advanced in their learning, take care to pay them that respect and deference which is due to their superior age and knowledge; especially, if, at any time, they are employed by the governess or teachers to direct you in your tasks.

I have got a thousand things besides to say to you; but these must be the subjects of some future letters. Let me advise you, however, before I conclude, to be punctual in saying your prayers every morning and evening. You know I gave you peremptory instructions on this head at parting, and, I hope, you will not forget them. I expect to hear a good account of your behaviour and improvement from Mrs. Bromley, who has promised to write to me now and then. Farewell, my dear Sophy: may God Almighty bless you, and preserve you from all evil! I ever  
am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

## LETTER II.

My dear SOPHY,

I Had lately the pleasure of hearing from Mrs. Bromley, that you make great progress in learning your English, and that she expects you will soon be one of the best readers in the school. To be able to read with propriety, is certainly a very genteel accomplishment, and not so easy to be acquired as most people imagine; and, perhaps, you will not find one woman in five hundred that is possessed of it. There are so many faulty ways of reading, which young people are apt to run into, that it is difficult to avoid them all; and when once a bad habit is contracted, it is almost impossible to correct it.

There is your Aunt Filmer, who reads with such a canting tone as grates the ears of the whole company. She has frequently almost sung me to sleep, though reading one of the most diverting books in the world. Your cousin Pulteney, you know, reads with such hurry and rapidity, and such neglect of the proper stops and pauses, that the most attentive hearer cannot understand one sentence she pronounces; whilst Mrs. Dashwood reads in such a slow and slovenly manner, and draws out the words to such an immoderate length, that nobody has patience to follow her. Mrs. Nugent reads with such a loud and shrill voice as stuns the ears of the whole audience. It might do very well in a public assembly, but is altogether unfit for a tea-table: whereas Miss Littleton's accent is so faint and feeble,

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feeble, that you must apply your ear almost to her mouth, before you can understand the subject.

I would, therefore, have you form yourself upon the example of your governess, who, indeed, is one of the best readers I ever heard. She reads with the same easy natural voice as she uses in conversation. She observes the stops and pauses with great exactness. She reads so slow as to be easily understood by any person, who will give a proper attention, and is not absolutely dull; and yet so fast, as not to disgust those of the quickest apprehension. Her voice she carefully adapts to the number and extent of her audience. When she reads to a large company, her voice is high without being shrill; when to a small one, it is low, but withal distinct. In a word, she is a complete mistress of the art of reading; and you cannot fail to become so too, if you imitate her manner, and follow her directions. There are besides, some niceties in reading, which, I am afraid, are above your comprehension at present: but when you are farther advanced in your learning, I will explain them to you in some future letter. Your Papa, your brothers, and sisters join me in offering our love to you.

I am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T.



## LETTER III.

My dear SOPHY,

**T**HERE is nothing gives me so much pleasure as to hear of your happiness and welfare, and your daily improvement in learning. If I know my own heart, I have an equal affection for all my children; but, whatever be the reason, I always receive greater pleasure from hearing an account of your improvement, than from seeing that of your little sisters and brothers, who are immediately under my eye. Whether this be owing to some partial fondness for you, or that my affection is strengthened and increased by absence, I cannot tell: but so it is in fact. It was therefore, my dear, with the greatest joy I received a letter lately from Mrs. Bromley, informing me of the quick progress you make in writing, and that I might soon expect to receive a letter from yourself. When it comes, it will be a new addition to my happiness.

Writing, my Dear, is one of the most useful arts that ever was invented. Were it not for this art, the knowledge of every person would be confined within the narrow circle of his own experience and observation; but by means of this, we can enjoy the knowledge and discoveries of all those who have lived before us, and, in some measure, make them our own. By means of this art, you may converse with your friend, though removed to the most distant corner of the

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the world, almost as well as if personally present. By means of this art, you will be enabled to correspond with me, and to inform me of all your wants and desires; whereas you are now obliged to employ Mrs. Bromley, to whom, perhaps, you do not chuse to open your mind so freely as to me. By means of this art you can preserve on paper whatever you read, hear, or see, that is worth remembering; and which it would otherwise be impossible to treasure up in your memory.

But it is not only an useful, it is likewise a polite qualification; nor should any one pretend to the character of an *accomplished woman*, who cannot write a distinct and legible hand. Let me, therefore advise you, my dear Sophy, to be remarkably careful and diligent in learning the art of writing. Follow the directions of your master, who, I presume, will lay before you the most perfect copies and examples. Of all the various hands, a round hand is, in my opinion, the most proper; for when you are a mistress of that, you may, with great ease, learn either a neat running, or Italian hand; but if you begin with the latter, you never can arrive at any degree of perfection in the former. When you write never be in a hurry, but proceed with the greatest care and deliberation: always write as well as you can, and then your hand will be still improving; for if you do not, instead of improving, it will, every day, become worse. I have sent you Newbery's dictionary, to assist you in spelling: for, before you put pen to paper, you must resolve not to indulge yourself in the  
wrong

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wrong spelling of a single word: and if you faithfully observe this rule for a short time, you will soon be able to spell any word without the help of a dictionary. Nothing, indeed, is more unworthy the character of a gentlewoman, than false spelling: and yet, in this respect, I am sorry to say it, most of our sex are shamefully guilty; and some of them too, whom I know to be persons of excellent good sense and distinguished abilities: but this must have been owing to bad habits contracted in their youth, of which they were never, afterwards, able to get the better. It is therefore your part to prevent, what it is so extremely difficult to correct. Farewell, my dear Sophy, and be assured that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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## LETTER IV.

From SOPHIA to her mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Have all your letters lying by me: I read them carefully every morning. I am obliged to you for the good advice you give me; and I will endeavour to follow it. I am not able to tell you,  
Mamma,

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Mamma, how I was affected, when I read the love and affection you express for me: all I can say is, that I wept for joy. God grant I may prove as good a woman as you wish me to be! it shall always be my endeavour to become such. I live very happily: my school-fellows are very fond of me, and Mrs. Bromley is very kind and careful. I am learning English, sewing, writing, cyphering, and dancing: and Mrs. Bromley says I shall soon begin to learn French.

I would have written to you before now; but, you know, you forbade me, at parting, to send you any letters, till I could write a pretty good hand. I am afraid you will think it still very indifferent; but I have written as well as I could, and, I hope, I shall improve daily. I have followed your directions in spelling; for I have scarce written one word without looking for it in the dictionary, which you sent me, and for which I am obliged to you: but if I have made any mistakes, you will be so good as to let me know in your next letter. Please to offer my duty to my papa, and my kind love to my brothers and sisters. I am, my dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

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LET-



## LETTER V.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHIA,

I Received your letter some weeks ago. You know I love you, and therefore I need not, indeed I cannot tell you, how much pleasure it gave me. I am glad to hear, that you live on such good terms with your governess and school-fellows; and, you may be assured, you will always continue to do so, if you follow the directions I gave you in my first letter. You have been remarkably careful in spelling; for I do not observe a single instance of false spelling thro' the whole of your letter. You are more improved in your writing than I could have expected: and I hope you will be as diligent in the other parts of your education; particularly in cyphering, which you write me you are now learning.

Of all the various qualifications of an accomplished woman, there is not any one more useful and necessary than cyphering. Without this, you must depend upon your memory for every farthing of money that passes through your hands. Without this, you can neither keep an account of the money you receive from me, nor of what you expend yourself. Without this, you will be in danger of being cheated by every person you deal with. Without this you will not be able to assist me in the management of our family, which, however, I expect you should be in a few years; and still less will you be able to superintend the  
æconomy

## THE POLITE LADY. II

œconomy of your own, when, in the course of Providence, you come to be mistress of one. In a word, without this, you will be altogether unqualified for several of the most important duties in life.

Let me, therefore, persuade you, my dear Sophy, to give particular attention to your cyphering, and to acquire such a competent knowledge in this useful art; as is proper for a woman. I say a woman; for it is not necessary that she should understand it so perfectly as a man: as her sphere of action is more confined, so her knowledge, in this respect, should be more confined likewise. You ought, however, I think, to be a complete mistress of the four simple rules of arithmetic, the rule of proportion, and a plain method of book-keeping, together with some knowledge of fractions vulgar and decimal; which last will be of great use in rendering your accompts more short and expeditious. And I would advise you to begin to keep a distinct account of all the money you receive or lay out, and, indeed, of every thing belonging to you that can be numbered; as soon, I mean, as you have acquired a knowledge of cyphering sufficient for this purpose. By this means you will, at once, impress the rules of arithmetic more deeply in your memory, and insensibly acquire such a habit of accuracy and regularity, as will be of great service to you in your future conduct. At present I have nothing farther to add, but to recommend you to the care and protection of Almighty God. I am, my dear Sophy,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.  
L E T.

## LETTER VI.

My dear SOPHY,

**B**Y a letter I lately received from Mrs. Bromley, I had the pleasure of hearing of your welfare, and of the great improvement you make in dancing. This is one of the most genteel and polite accomplishments which a young lady can possess. It will give a natural, easy, and graceful air to all the motions of your body, and enable you to behave in company with a modest assurance and address. Besides, it is an art, in which you will frequently be obliged to shew your skill, in the fashionable balls and assemblies, to which your birth and connections will intitle you to be introduced; and to appear ignorant or awkward on these occasions, could not fail to put you to the blush. It will likewise contribute greatly to your health, as it is a kind of exercise which you may take when the badness of the weather, or other circumstances, hinder you from going abroad.

I therefore expect, my dear Sophy, that you will apply to your dancing with great care and diligence: and, indeed, it will require your greatest care and diligence to render yourself a complete mistress of this art. Dancing is not such a trifling and insignificant qualification, nor yet so easy to be acquired, as many people imagine. It does not consist merely in the management of the heels, as it is usually termed: no; it comprehends every motion, every gesture,  
every

every attitude of the body ; and she who cannot walk, or stand, or even sit in a genteel, graceful manner, does not deserve the name of a good dancer. There is lady Waddlepace, who pretends to understand all the different figures in dancing, and possibly she does so ; but still she has such a hobbling and awkward gait, as plainly shews that she has no conception of what is meant by elegant and graceful motion : whilst her daughter, when she stands or sits, does not know how to hold her head, her hands, or any other part of her body, but appears as unmeaning as a lifeless statue.

But do not mistake me : though I caution you against an awkward and slovenly manner, I do not mean that you should run into the opposite extreme of a precise and affected one, nor acquire a slighty and jaunty air, which are no less ridiculous. Lady Musgrave is so stiff and constrained, that you would almost take her for a living machine ; and miss Bobbadil's gait is so extremely sprightly and spirited, that, whenever she begins to walk, you would imagine she is going to dance. All these, my dear, are faults, which you ought carefully to avoid. Imitate your governess, who has as polite and genteel a manner as any woman I ever saw ; and you will insensibly acquire the same easy and graceful carriage. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T.



## LETTER VII.

My dear SOPHY,

**L**AST week, I received a letter from Mrs. Bromley, giving me an account of your health, and the great progress you make in all the different parts of your education, especially in *drawing*; for which, she says, you discover a particular taste. The pleasure this gave me, is more easily felt than expressed. Every step you advance in your learning is a new addition to my happiness. Your education has opened to me a fresh source of pleasure, to which I was formerly an entire stranger. Go on, my dear Sophy, thus to render me the happiest of mothers, by making yourself an accomplished woman: and no young lady deserves this honourable character without a competent knowledge in the art of drawing. Were it only to be considered as an innocent amusement; yet, even in this light, would it merit your attention: for innocent amusements are of more importance to our happiness, and perhaps to our virtue too, than many people imagine. The most active and busy stations of life have still some intervals of rest, some hours of leisure. The body as well as the mind requires it. And, if these are not employed in innocent amusements, they will either lie heavy on our hands, and, instead of raising, depress our spirits; or, what is worse, tempt us, *to kill the time*, as it is called, by such amusements as are far from being innocent.

But,

But, my dear, drawing is not only an innocent amusement: it is more; it is an useful qualification. It will exercise, delight and improve your imagination, by filling it with the images of every thing that is beautiful or curious, in the works of art or nature. It will strengthen and correct your judgment, by obliging you to examine the objects you copy, with greater care and accuracy than you would otherwise have done; and it may sometimes be an assistance to your memory, as it will enable you to take down on paper a greater variety of objects, or circumstances of the same object, than it would be easy, or perhaps, possible to remember. It will likewise be of great use in furnishing you with beautiful patterns and designs for sewing, which those who are ignorant of this art must borrow from others, without being able to judge whether they are good or bad.

But I have neither time nor inclination to enumerate all the advantages, which a young lady may derive from the art of drawing. What I have said, however, will, I hope, be sufficient to kindle in you a desire of acquiring an accomplishment, at once so useful and genteel. I have an entire confidence in the abilities of your instructor, as I know he is a perfect master of the art of drawing; and therefore I will not pretend to give you any particular directions. Allow me only to give you one general advice, which is this: let the objects from which you copy, be chiefly the works of nature; or, at least, such works of art, as are faithful imitations of nature; and carefully avoid every thing that is unnatural, whimsical, or romantic, as most Chinese drawings

ings are. To imitate the former, has a natural tendency to improve the taste: to copy the latter, has as natural a tendency to corrupt and pervert it. Farewell, my dear Sophy. May God Almighty bless you! and be assured, that your happiness is dearer to me than my own. I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

## LETTER VIII.

My dear SOPHY,

**M**R S. Bromley writes me, that you are become a great proficient both in vocal and instrumental music. This, though not the most useful, is certainly one of the most genteel qualifications, which a young lady can possess. It is, of all others, the most agreeable amusement, the most pleasant recreation; and she that understands music, need never complain, that her time lies heavy on her hand. It is, at once, the best preventive, and the most effectual cure for melancholy and low spirits; as it can banish every gloomy and desponding thought, and inspire us with cheerfulness and good humour.

The power of music over the human mind is very surprising, and almost irresistible. When we are depressed with sorrow and grief, it can cheer

cheer and enliven our drooping spirits. When we are elated with excessive and immoderate joy (for joy may be immoderate and even dangerous), it can allay the violence of the passion, bring us down from the giddy height, and reduce us to a state of pleasing tranquillity. If inflamed with anger, or boiling with rage, it can soften and melt us into pity and compassion. In a word, hatred, malice, envy, and every other vicious passion may, by the power of music, be presently banished, or at least, charmed and allayed for a while; and, if the charm be frequently repeated, they may at last be overcome.

These, my dear, are a few of the many advantages which may be derived from music. But all this is only meant with regard to those who have a *taste* for music, or, as it is commonly called, a *good ear*; for there are some people so utterly devoid of this *taste*, that they can make no other distinction of sounds, than that of more or less loud. To them, the noise of a blacksmith's hammer, and the finest airs of the violin, are the same. Of this class is lady Betty Dudley, who though she comes to the Opera, because it is the fashion, yet confesses she receives no more pleasure from the finest concert of music, than from the rattling of her coach: whilst a person of a good ear, improved by practice, receives from such an entertainment the most exquisite and refined pleasure; perhaps the most refined that can be enjoyed in this world, except that of doing a good action.

A great deal more, my dear, might be added in praise of music; but that would be needless, as I am writing to one, who of her own accord,

is



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is sufficiently fond of it. As most young ladies are taught to play on the harpsichord and guitar, I expect you will learn to perform on both these instruments, especially the first. But still I would have you to apply your chief attention to vocal music, because, in its perfection, it is of a far more excellent nature than that which is merely instrumental; the merit of the latter being always determined by its approach to the former. A fine singer is much more esteemed than a skilful organist. At the same time that she affords greater pleasure to her hearers, she reflects greater honour upon herself. The accomplishment is more personal.

After all, my dear Sophy, I do not mean that you should apply to your music so as to neglect the other parts of your education; nor do I expect that you should arrive at the highest degree of perfection in this, or in any other accomplishment. It is no shame for a young lady to be outdone in voice or judgment by an opera-singer; or in dancing, by one who performs upon the stage; nor indeed, in any other art, by one who is a complete master of it; who has employed the greatest part, if not the whole, of his time, in learning it; and gets his livelihood by practising and teaching it. Perhaps, on the contrary, it would be a shame for her to be equal to any one of these in their respective arts; because, in that case, she must be supposed to have employed more time in it, than is consistent with her learning all the other parts of a *complete education*. The business of a young lady is to acquire such a competent knowledge of all these polite accomplishments, as to be able, upon occasion, to perform

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perform decently herself, and to judge with discernment of the performances of others. She who is a mere singer, a mere dancer, a mere drawer, or indeed, a mere any thing, has no title to the character of an accomplished woman. That is composed of a competent knowledge of these and every other polite accomplishment, heightened and improved by company and conversation.

I have a great many other things to say to you; but, as my letter is already too long, I must reserve them for another occasion. Your Papa, your brothers and sisters, join me in wishing you all manner of happiness. I am, my dear Sophy,

**Your affectionate mother,**

**PORTIA**

**L E T**

## LETTER IX.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**I**T is now more than a month, I think, since I received your last letter. I am glad that Mrs. Bromley gives you so favourable an account of the progress I make in music: perhaps it is more than I deserve. I can only say, that I shall do all that lies in my power to learn this, and every other thing you desire me. I am greatly obliged to you for the good advice and directions you have given me, in your several letters: it shall always be my constant endeavour to observe them. As you are pleased to say, that nothing gives you greater pleasure, than to hear of my improvement; so, you may be assured, nothing gives me so great pleasure, as to receive your approbation. For, tho' I am sensible of the usefulness and importance of all the different accomplishments, which you recommend to me; yet if I know my own heart, I think it is rather from a prospect of making you happy, than from any regard to my own interest, that I apply to my learning with so much pleasure and diligence. How happy am I in having a mother, who places her chief delight in the welfare of her children! God grant I may never render myself

## THE POLITE LADY. 21

myself unworthy of so good a parent! I hope I never shall.

I have been learning French for a considerable time past, and my master seems to be very well satisfied with my progress. He has lately put into my hands *Gil Blas* and the *Diable Boiteux*, both which, I think, are highly entertaining and improving. Be so good as to write me your opinion of the matter, and whether you think the advantages I may reap from a knowledge of this language, will be sufficient to reward the time and labour which are necessary to acquire it; for I would not willingly throw away more time upon any part of my education than it really deserves. Please to present my duty to my Papa, and my love to my sisters and brothers. I am, dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

L E T.



## LETTER X.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**H**OW happy did your letter make me! Perhaps I read it with the eyes of a fond parent, but, I thought, I perceived in it good sense, dutifulness, love, gratitude, and every other virtuous affection. What a blessing it is to have a good child! Let those declare whom heaven hath so highly favoured: or rather let them feel; for it is a heart-felt joy, not to be expressed. I am glad to hear, that you are so far advanced in learning the French tongue, as it is an accomplishment which every young lady ought to possess. It is now become so much the language of the fashionable world, that they who cannot read and write, and even speak it on occasion, must make a very awkward figure in polite company, and be frequently put to the blush. Nor is it the fashionable language in this nation only; it is such likewise in almost all the nations of the world: so that, if you should have occasion to correspond with any person in foreign countries, who do not understand English, you can do it in French. But what I consider as the chief advantage, is, that it will give you access to a variety of French authors, which are not translated into English, or, at least, not with the true spirit of the *originals*. Though the French are  
certainly

## THE POLITE LADY. 23

certainly inferior to us in the more solid and useful parts of learning, yet, in others, they seem to excel us: particularly in *genteel comedy*; of which Moliere is an undeniable proof: as you will perceive when you are able to judge of the beauties of composition; for we have no comic writer who has painted such a variety of characters, or finished particular ones so highly.

After all, my dear Sophy, let not your studying the French make you neglect the English, which is, by far, the most excellent language of the two: and, though it were not, still as it is your mother-tongue, it would be a greater shame for you to be ignorant of it, than of any foreign language whatever. Could a young lady write French as well as madame de Sevigné herself, yet if she could not write good English, I should think she had employed her time to very little, or, indeed, to very bad purpose. I would much rather have you to write good English and indifferent French, than excellent French and bad English: though, I imagine, it is very possible for you to acquire a perfect knowledge of both languages. I only mean, that, in case of a competition, you should always give the preference to the English. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XI.

My dear SOPHY,

I HAD, lately, the pleasure of hearing from Mrs. Bromley, that you are daily improving in all the different branches of your education, and particularly in geography, which, she says, you have been learning for some months past. This is an accomplishment equally useful and genteel; but in which, I am sorry to say it, most of our sex are shamefully deficient; as I could prove by a variety of examples. Your aunt Delaval has frequently asked me whether Constantinople lay in Asia or Africa, and a thousand other questions no less ridiculous. Miss Fenton, whose wit is greater than her knowledge, and her vanity greater than both, is perpetually committing blunders of this kind. Mr. Grenville happened, the other day, to be reading the news-papers to a large company, and, among other articles, one from Warsaw, giving an account of a certain nobleman, who, for some slight cause, had divorced his lady. He had no sooner finished, than Miss, with her usual forwardness, observed that these Spaniards were the worst husbands in the world. Some of the company smiled, others blushed, and the rest remained demurely grave. Miss, perceiving her error, was confounded and abashed. But the gentleman, out of his great humanity, endeavoured to apologize for her, as well as he could, by adding, that the young lady's remark was very just; that, though the place mentioned in the news-papers was the chief city of

of Poland, he believed there was a town of the same name somewhere in Spain, and it was a very easy matter to mistake the one for the other. Into such shameful blunders do young ladies frequently fall, from their ignorance of geography; and to such pitiful shifts must their friends have recourse, to save them the blush of confessing their ignorance. But the knowledge of geography will effectually prevent your committing any blunders of this kind, as it will teach you the names of all the principal towns in the world. Nor is this all; it will further acquaint you with the climate, the soil, and produce of all the different parts of the earth; and with the customs, manners, government, and religion of the several inhabitants: by which means, you will be enabled to talk pertinently on most subjects that occur in conversation.

But there is still a higher part of geography, which, however, I don't think to be above the capacity of a young lady; I mean that which treats of the figure of the earth; of its turning round its own axis (I think they call it) once in twenty-four hours, which occasions the succession of day and night; and round the sun once in a year, which causes the regular changes of the seasons: besides a variety of other truths, equally curious and entertaining, which will greatly open and enlarge your mind, and free it from a thousand prejudices, that cloud the minds of the ignorant. What an infinite pleasure is it for a lady to sit in her own room, and, by the use of the globe or maps, to examine all the various parts of the earth, and to travel, as it were, in the space of a few hours, over the whole world!



In a word, the advantages arising from the knowledge of geography are many, and almost innumerable. Nor is it valuable merely on its own account: it has likewise a close connection with, and a great influence on other studies; particularly that of history, which it is impossible thoroughly to understand without it, as I shall endeavour to shew you in some future letter. Mean while I conclude, by recommending you to the protection of Almighty God, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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## LETTER XII.

My dear SOPHY,

SOME weeks ago, I received a letter from Bromley, in which she commends you for the sweetness of your temper and your great improvement in the needle. To say that I was glad on this occasion, is flat and unmeaning: I was overjoyed; I felt an emotion of pleasure, known only to those who have a daughter whom they love with the same warmth of affection. Go on, my dear Sophy, thus to encrease the happiness of your mother, by consulting your own interest: and, indeed, you cannot consult it more effectually,

tually, than by making yourself a complete mistress of the needle.

For though there are many other female accomplishments more showy and specious, yet there is not any one more useful, nay, I may venture to say, there is none equally so. What an infinite number of the female sex, and, perhaps, the most virtuous part of it too, live by the needle? How greatly does it contribute to render our persons more decent, more agreeable, and more beautiful? What a surprising difference is there between the appearance of lady Morton, whom you have often seen at church, and Dol Common, the cinder-wench? And yet this difference is chiefly owing to dress; and dress depends chiefly on the needle. Besides, as you advance, you will have such patterns set you for sewing, as will, at once, entertain and improve your fancy; and enable you the better to learn the art of drawing, which is one of the highest parts of your education.

After all, my dear, I do not desire you to apply to your needle so as to hurt your eyes, or weaken your constitution: far from it. On the contrary, I would have this, and all your other studies, carried on in a perfect consistency with your health, which is never to be sacrificed to any consideration whatever. All I mean is, that you should not neglect this qualification as useless, nor despise it as mean, or beneath a gentlewoman. Useless it cannot be, for there is no station of life in which a woman can be placed, where it is not highly serviceable, and, for the most part, absolutely necessary. And it is so far from being mean and unworthy the character of

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a gentlewoman, that I will venture to say, there never was an accomplished woman without a competent skill in this art. Of the truth of this I may, perhaps, endeavour to convince you in some other letter. Mean while I conclude, by recommending you to the divine protection, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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LETTER XIII.

From SOPHIA to her mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**I** Have received several letters from you of late; and indeed nothing gives me so much pleasure; as they contain an account of your own welfare, and that of the rest of the family, with the most tender expressions of love, and the best directions for pursuing my studies. How shall I ever repay the obligations you are daily laying upon me! I never can; nor do you expect it. The only return, I know, which you desire, is, that I should, at last, become a virtuous and accomplished woman; and, if I do not, I must certainly be reckoned the most inexcusable creature in the world; as few are blest with so many advantages. But, I hope, you shall never have reason

## THE POLITE LADY. 29

reason to complain of my negligence: I am sure you never shall, of my want of duty and obedience.

I enjoy a very good state of health, and am as happy as I could wish in every respect. Mrs. Bromley is very agreeable in her behaviour, and very reasonable in her commands, except that, I think, she is rather too strict and peremptory with regard to the article of cleanliness; for we must, every day, appear at dinner, as neat and clean as if we were going to church. Now this consumes a great deal of time, which, I imagine, might be employed to better purpose. Please to give me your advice on this subject in your next letter. I have no more to add, but to offer my duty to my papa and you, and my love to my brothers and sisters. I am

Your obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LET-



## LETTER XIV.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHIA,

**Y**OUR last letter, which I received some weeks ago, gave me the greatest pleasure. You are as much improved in your writing as I could have wished; and more indeed than I could have expected. Your expressions of duty and obedience are extremely agreeable: they, at once, discover a good heart and a clear head. Do not make yourself uneasy, my Dear, because you can never repay the favours I have done you. I am repaid already. I enjoy as much pleasure in bestowing, as you can possibly do in receiving them; and, if I should have the additional happiness to see you become a polite and virtuous woman, I shall be doubly rewarded. To receive favours from a stranger, indeed, which we can never return, is always disagreeable, and sometimes dangerous. But, with parent and child, the case is very different. The connexion between them is so close by nature, that all the good offices in the world can hardly make it closer. I am glad to hear that you live so happily. It is no more than I had reason to expect, from the sweetness of your own disposition, and the prudence of your governess; and I should be sorry if you considered her orders, with regard to cleanliness, as any diminution of your happiness; for she is certainly in the right.

Clean-

Cleanliness, my Dear, is a habit, I had almost said a virtue, which you cannot learn too soon, nor retain too long, both from a regard to yourself, and to the world around you. It will, at once, contribute to the ease and health of your body, and be the means of introducing you into polite and genteel company; at least, the opposite extreme of dirtiness will certainly deprive you of that advantage; it will either make your company to be shunned; or, if that cannot be done, it will always render your presence disagreeable.

But beware, my Dear, that you don't confound cleanliness with finery; not mistake the one for the other. They are as distinct in their nature as any two things can well be; and, though not inconsistent, are frequently found to be separated. A woman may be very neat and clean, in a plain and simple dress; and she may be very dirty and tawdry, in a fine and costly one. There is miss Molesworth: She never wears any thing above a plain silk gown; but that, and all the other parts of her dress, which are equally simple, she puts on and adjusts with such elegance and propriety, as pleases the eye of every one that beholds her: whilst lady Dormer, on the contrary, tho' drest in the richest satin and brocade, and loaded with a profusion of jewels and pearls, is, after all, so slovenly and tawdry, that she may rather be said to *carry* her cloaths like a porter, than to *wear* them like a well-drest lady.

I, therefore, expect you will obey your governess's orders in this, and in every thing else, because I am confident, she will never order you  
to

to do any thing but what is just and reasonable. But you say, it consumes a great deal of time: I am persuaded you will always find as much as you ought to bestow (in order to be neat) between the time that is usual for leaving off school, and that of going to dinner. Besides it will, every day, require less, for the more you practise it, the easier will it become; and a twelve-month hence, I dare say, you will be able to dress yourself as well in half an hour, as you can do, at present, in a whole one. You may likewise consider it as a kind of diversion or relaxation from more serious business; and diversions, you know, of one sort or other, you must have. Your papa, your brothers and sisters join in love to you. I ever am,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LET.

## LETTER XV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Received your very kind letter, and am greatly obliged to you for your good advice, which I shall ever consider in light of a command. I think myself bound in duty to obey all your orders, whether I understand the reasonableness of them or not; tho' ever since I was capable to distinguish right from wrong, you have always had the good-nature and condescension to convince me, that whatever you desired me to do was for my own interest and advantage.

There is still another particular, in which I must beg your advice; as I am resolved to do nothing without your permission. What I mean is the choice of my friends: for, tho' we are commonly all in the same room, yet I have no more than a general acquaintance with any one of my fellow-boarders. I have not contracted a friendship and intimacy with any one of them. I might indeed have done it long ago. I have had frequent opportunities. I have been invited, and even importuned to it. But, sensible of my own incapacity to judge for myself, I have declined all their offers of friendship, and still keep myself on general terms with them. Some say I am spiritless; some call me shy; and others think I am proud. But I am the less concerned what  
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they either think or say, if you approve of my conduct.

I don't chuse to find fault with the behaviour of any of my companions. They are all as good, perhaps they are better than I am ; and, I know, you would condemn any thing that had the least appearance of detraction. But still, I must own, there are three or four of them, for whom I have a particular esteem. They are so decent and regular in their carriage ; so open and honest in all their actions ; and so civil and obliging in their manner, that Mrs. Bromley is always pointing them out to the rest as an example worthy of their imitation. But, even with them, I will not enter into a strict friendship, till I receive your advice ; which, I hope, you will give me as soon as you can. Please to present my duty to my papa, and my love to my brothers and sisters. I am,

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LET

## LETTER XVI.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**H**OW shall I express the joy I received from the perusal of your last letter! How happy am I in having a daughter, who, at an age, when most young ladies imagine they can think and act for themselves, is so humble and dutiful, as to undertake nothing without the permission and advice of her mother! But can't I conceal my joy within my own breast? Or, if it must have vent, can't I be satisfied with imparting it to others? Why tell it to my daughter? Why, my Dear, I tell it to you for two reasons: both because I like to think of you, and talk to you, and also because I am persuaded it will be an additional motive to your persevering in the same virtuous course. For, I believe, you have such a tender regard for my happiness, that, when once you know how greatly it depends on your good behaviour, you will never lessen it by a contrary conduct.

And now, after this flow of parental affection, I come to give you my best advice with regard to the choice of your friends. This, my dear, is one of the most important steps in life, and should be conducted with the greatest prudence; otherwise, instead of being a source of happiness and pleasure, as it may and ought to be, it will prove the occasion of much pain and uneasiness.

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The first thing, then, and indeed the principal thing, to be considered, in the choice of your friend, is, that she be entirely free from all manner of vice, and from foibles too, as much as possible; for if she is not, you will be in danger of being corrupted by her bad example. We naturally, and, as it were, insensibly contract the manners of those with whom we converse. In a vicious example, especially, there is a kind of contagion, which rages like a plague, and infects all those who are within the reach of its baleful influence. It undermines our virtue imperceptibly. It steals upon us unawares, and takes us by surprize. There is an old proverb to this purpose, which is not the less true for being common, viz. "that birds of a feather flock together;" by which I think is generally understood, that persons of the same sentiments and character are apt to associate with one another. But, I apprehend, it will likewise bear this construction, which is not so commonly attended to, that, let their tempers and dispositions be ever so different when they meet, yet, by a long and intimate acquaintance, they will, in the end, become nearly alike.

But, lest you should not be able to apply general rules to particular cases, I shall point out some of the vices and foibles, which you ought chiefly to guard against in the choice of a friend. Above all things, then, let her be free from falsehood and deceit, from hypocrisy and dissimulation. Let her be open, honest, and sincere, in all her actions. Sincerity is the foundation, it is the soul of friendship, without this it cannot possibly exist. For how can you cultivate a friendship  
with

with one who is always endeavouring to deceive you? Upon whom you cannot depend for the truth of any word she speaks, or the sincerity of any action she performs? A friendship with such a person, if indeed there could be any, would be alarmed and disturbed by perpetual fears and suspicions, which are utterly inconsistent with the nature of this sacred union.

Flattery is another vice, nearly a-kin to the former, and no less an enemy to friendship. It consists in praising us for accomplishments which we do not possess, and in concealing or extenuating the faults of which we are, unhappily guilty. By the former we are puffed up with a ridiculous pride; by the latter we are lulled into a dangerous, and often fatal security. It is the part of a true friend, on the contrary, to inform us of all our foibles and imperfections, and to give us all the assistance in her power to correct and amend them. For how else can we acquire a thorough knowledge of ourselves? We may do so, indeed, by the malice, I was going to say by the kindness, of our enemies (for certainly it is an act of kindness to acquaint us with our real characters,) but where is the probability of our ever being reformed by their admonitions? They censure our faults with such severity and rudeness, that, instead of being reclaimed, we are only exasperated. Their reflections, we imagine, proceed from prejudice and ill-nature; and, therefore, we don't believe them to be just: or, if we do, perhaps we scorn to alter our conduct, at the time, and in the manner in which they propose, lest we should seem to be obliged to them for the favour. But a sincere and sensible friend manages the matter



ter with greater lenity and address. She points out and corrects our failings with such humanity, and politeness, that we cannot possibly take offence. She probes and dresses the wound with such a gentle and delicate hand, that we feel no pain in the application of the remedy. We are pleased at the same time that we are cured.

The vice directly opposed to flattery is calumny and detraction. It is, of all others, the most odious in its nature, the most pernicious in its effects, and the most inconsistent with friendship. A friend! can that honourable name be bestowed upon one, whose whole life is spent in the low and dirty arts of scandal and defamation? whose greatest pleasure it is, to blacken and sully the reputation of every person she knows. To contract a friendship with one of this temper, would argue the height of folly. You might then expect to have all your foibles and weaknesses exposed to the view of the whole world, and your character loaded with a thousand blemishes, from which, perhaps, it is entirely free: like the silly clown in the fable, who finding a snake in the fields, chill'd and benum'd with cold, put it in his bosom; but no sooner was it recruited by the genial warmth of his body, than it stung him to the quick, and made him pay dear for his ill-judged humanity.

Your friend should likewise be free from pride, vanity, and self-conceit. For one that is immoderately fond of herself, is not likely to be very fond of another; she that has a high opinion of her own accomplishments, will probably have, but a very low opinion of yours. There is nobody, she imagines, so virtuous as to deserve her affection,

affection, or so sensible as to merit her esteem ; and without esteem and affection there can be no friendship.

Let her have nothing aukward, ridiculous, or affected in her manner. If she has, besides the danger of being infected by her example, you will frequently be put to the blush on her account. For one blushes for her friend almost as naturally as for herself.

And now, my Dear, having thus mentioned some of the principal vices and foibles, from which your friend ought to be free, I should next proceed to consider those virtues and good qualities, which she ought to possess : but this shall be the subject of another letter. In the mean time I conclude, by recommending you to the divine protection, and am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XVII.

My dear SOPHY,

**A**S I would not wish to leave you long undetermined in a matter of so much consequence as the choice of a friend, I have taken the first opportunity, you see, of resuming the subject; and shall now endeavour to point out those virtues and good qualities, which you ought chiefly to regard in her character.

First of all then, my Dear, let her be one who is dutiful to her parents: for she that is undutiful to her parents, will never be faithful to you. She that is deficient in this most important of all duties, is not likely to be very observant of any other. And, indeed, from a young lady's behaviour in this respect, you may form a pretty just notion of her character in general; for one, that is so ungrateful, so unnatural, as to have thrown off all respect and deference to her parents, may, and, probably, will run into every other kind of vice and wickedness. Such a person, I hope, you will never make your friend. With such a one I would not even have you to keep company. If you do, you may be the worse for it: it is impossible you can ever be the better.

Another essential ingredient in the character of a true friend, is humanity and good-nature; a certain sweetness of disposition and equality of mind, not to be ruffled by every trifling accident, nor soured by any misfortune. A person, blessed with this happy temper, possesses within herself  
a perpetual

a perpetual fund of chearfulness and good humour, and diffuses joy and gladness wherever she comes. Pleased with herself, she is the more apt to be pleased with those around her. Slow to anger, she is not provoked by slight offences; and ready to forgive, she never harbours resentment in her breast. As she is happy in her own mind, she delights to communicate happiness to others; and, therefore, is willing to cultivate a friendship with any person, that seems deserving of her confidence. And, as she is steady and uniform in her conduct, she never forsakes her old friends, unless, by their folly or wickedness, they have forfeited all claim to any further regard. In a word, without good-nature, there can be no such thing as friendship. The ill-natured, the peevish, and passionate, are utterly unqualified for this virtuous intercourse. A heart, overrun with these vicious passions, is not susceptible of such fine and delicate feelings. Friendship is a tender plant, and will not grow in such a coarse and uncultivated soil. A passionate person, in the violence of her anger, or rather madness, will say and do a thousand things, that are entirely inconsistent with all the laws of friendship; and the misfortune is, that every trifle is sufficient to rouse her passion. The breaking of a China-dish, the treading on a lap-dog, any thing will do: the fewel is within her, and the least spark will kindle the fire, and blow it up into a flame.

Secrecy, my Dear, is another quality, which your friend ought to possess. She that cannot keep a secret, can never be a true friend. For what is a friend? It is one to whom we can unbosom ourselves without reserve; to whom we



can impart all our secret thoughts, wishes and designs, without the least fear of being betrayed, or having them exposed to the view of the world. Secrets are of two sorts : those which we would not disclose from the motives of shame, and those which we would not discover from the dictates of prudence. Of the former kind, I am persuaded, you have none as yet ; I hope you never will have any. Of the latter, I suppose, you have some already, and the longer you live, you will have the more. But to betray either the one or the other is equally unworthy the character of a friend, and equally injurious to us ; and she that has acted so basely once, should never have it in her power to deceive us again.

Beware, then, my dear Sophy, of entering into a friendship with any person, till you are well informed, whether or not she can keep a secret. Does she publish her own secrets ? If she does, be assured that she will never keep yours. She who has not sense enough to consult her own interest, is not likely to consult the interest of her friend. Has she ever betrayed the secrets of any of her own friends ? Intrust her not with yours ; for she that has betrayed one, may betray a thousand. Still farther : has she ever been known to communicate the secrets of one friend to another ? If she has, it is a breach of secrecy, and a violation of one of the most sacred laws of friendship.

This, my Dear, is a nice and delicate point, and one in which most young people are apt to mistake. Your friend intrusts you with a secret : you, considering it as your own, impart it to another, and she to a third, and so on, till at last  
it

it is known over the whole town. And yet the matter has only passed among friends; and why may not one friend communicate her secrets to another?—Where then lies the fault, and who is the guilty person? For a fault there certainly must be somewhere; since what was originally a secret, and ought for ever to have remained such, is now become as notorious as if it had been published in the news-papers.—To speak the truth, my Dear, the fault lies with you—You are the guilty person—You considered that as your own, which belonged to another.—The secret was not yours: it was your friend's, from whom you received it.—You was not at liberty to discover it to any person whatever.—You had no right, surely, to impart it to one, who, though, perhaps, your intimate friend, was an utter stranger to her.—Nay, what is more, you had no right to communicate it to your mutual friend; to one, who was equally well acquainted with you both. We may sometimes have very good reasons for intrusting a secret with one friend only. If we chuse to impart it to more, 'tis well; but let us do it ourselves. Let no other person usurp that privilege; for she that does so, forfeits all title to any future confidence.

By these means, my Dear, you may soon discover whether or not a person possesses the virtue of secrecy. But, if you should not, have an opportunity of examining her character in this way; if, after all your observations and enquiries, you are not yet fully satisfied; there is another infallible method, which, however, I would not advise you to have recourse to, without an absolute necessity. 'Tis this; impart to her, as a  
secret,

secret, something of so little consequence, that you are perfectly indifferent whether it be discovered or not. If she can keep a secret, and has, at the same time, a regard for you, she will conceal it, tho' perhaps, convinced in her own mind, that the discovery of it could be of no prejudice to you or to any body else. If she disclose it, you may then conclude, either that she cannot keep a secret, or, at least, that she has no esteem for you. In the former case, she cannot be a true friend to any person; in the latter, she can never be one to you.

The next thing, my dear Sophy, to be considered in the choice of a friend, is, that her sentiments and dispositions be nearly the same with your own: otherwise you can never agree. If you are fond of business, and she of diversions; if you love to stay at home, and she to be always gadding abroad; if you delight in plainness and simplicity, and she in pomp and splendour; if you are pleased with sensible and serious conversation, and she with nothing but fun and frolick; if you are fond of reading, and she of gaming; if you are happy in peace and quietness, and she only in crowds and company. In a word, if you love what she hates, and if she likes what you abhor, there can be no concord and agreement, no sympathy of temper, no harmony of sentiment, no mutual happiness; and, without mutual happiness, friendship cannot exist.

After all, my Dear, a perfect similarity of taste and sentiment is not to be expected, (our minds being as different as our faces) nor, indeed, could it be obtained, do I think it ought to be desired. The fairest characters are stained with  
many

many spots and blemishes. The most virtuous persons have many foibles and imperfections hanging about them, which they are not likely ever to correct, by conversing only with those of their own cast and complexion. Should the grave converse only with the grave, would they not, sometimes, be in danger of sinking into dulness; if the gay and sprightly keep company with none but those of the same humour, will they not, frequently, be apt to soar into madness? By the same practice, the frugal would probably become avaricious, and the generous, prodigal and profuse. It is therefore, my Dear, an instance of the greatest wisdom, to cultivate a friendship and acquaintance with those, who are possessed of such virtues and good qualities as are most opposite to our own weaknesses and foibles. Are we subject to melancholy and low spirits? let our friend be a person of chearfulness and good humour. Are we, on the other hand, too much addicted to levity and mirth? let our friend be more serious and sedate. Are we naturally hot and passionate? let us chuse a friend of a cool and calm disposition.

This, I am sensible, is not the general practice of the world. Few friendships are formed on these principles. Most people are fond of their own picture. They love the company of persons of the same temper and disposition with themselves. And doubtless they act very wisely, if to spend the time agreeably be the only end of friendship; for in such company they are most likely to be happy, though even that is not always the case. But if, on the contrary, the improvement of our virtues, and the correction of  
our



our vices and foibles be, as it most certainly is, the only rational end of friendship, then they act very unwisely. For, how can it ever be expected, that we should either improve our virtues, or correct our vices, by the example and conversation of persons of our own character and complexion? They possess none of the virtues we wish to acquire. They are guilty of the very vices we want to correct. Which, then, of all these our friends will take upon her to be our monitor and reformer? Will a passionate person, for instance, have the assurance to declaim against anger; and to shew the folly, the indecency, the deformity, and the fatal effects of that vice? Will a giddy and thoughtless creature be so very thoughtless indeed, as to ridicule levity and trifling, the two principal ingredients in her own character? Are the proud likely to condemn arrogance? the covetous, avarice? the prodigal, extravagance? In a word, will any person condemn those vices or foibles, of which she herself is guilty? But perhaps she may. Perhaps she is not conscious of her being guilty: for most people are so blinded by self-love, that frequently they don't see those spots and blemishes in their own character, which are visible to all the world besides. Suppose, then, she does condemn these vices, and exhort her friend to the practice of the opposite virtues; yet the influence of her bad example will be more than sufficient to destroy all the effects of her good advice.

Let me, therefore, beseech you, my dear Sophy, by the regard you have for your own happiness, and, what, I believe, you value no less, by the regard you have for mine, to be very cautious

tious and careful in the choice of your friend. As you have a great deal of spirit and vivacity, let her be something more composed and sedate. As, I know, you are very generous and open-hearted, let her be more frugal and prudent. In a word, let her possess, as much as possible, all those virtues and good qualities, which you are conscious, that you yourself most want.

I designed, at first, to have finished the subject in this letter; but I now find I cannot. It has already swelled to a greater bulk than I intended: and I would not, willingly, confound your judgment, nor burden your memory, with too many things at once. What further advice I have to give you on this head, you may expect to receive by the next post. For, in a matter of so great consequence, I would rather say too much than too little. I would rather mention some things superfluous, than omit any thing material. The former may be irksome, but the latter must be dangerous. And a wise person would surely suffer a little present pain, to prevent a lasting misery. Your papa, your sisters and brothers, join me in wishing you all manner of happiness. I am,

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

L E T-

## LETTER XVIII.

My dear SOPHY,

AS the happiness of our lives depends so much on the prudent choice of our friends, and as you are resolved to take no step in this important affair without the advice and directions of your mother, I now sit down to continue and finish the subject, which I have treated pretty largely in my two last letters.

Another qualification, then, which you ought chiefly to regard in the character of your friend, is good sense. By this I don't mean the knack of saying smart and lively things in conversation. This is not good sense; it is wit; two things of a very different nature, and which, tho' not inconsistent, are seldom united in the same person. Neither does it consist in a precise, grave, and formal deportment. This, indeed, has more the show and appearance of it; but 'tis only the outward show; it is frequently the wisdom of the body to conceal the weakness of the mind. A grave person may be sensible, and a witty person may be sensible: but good sense is neither gravity nor wit. It is something entirely distinct. It is the art of behaving, on all occasions, with such decency and prudence, as to obtain the approbation of every candid and impartial judge. I say, of every candid and impartial judge; for it is impossible to please all the world. Most people are so influenced, in their opinions, by ignorance, spleen, malice, envy, and a thousand other

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other prejudices, that what would please one, would as certainly displease another. Nor, indeed, would there be any merit in pleasing such people. It is an honour to receive the approbation of the good; it is almost a disgrace to receive the applause of the bad; at least when they are very lavish of their praises, we should always suspect that we have done amiss. I remember a story to this purpose, that is told of some ancient philosopher, who, upon hearing the populace, whom he considered as very incompetent judges of merit, praising and extolling him to the skies, turned about with a kind of surprise, and asked his friend "what bad action he had done;" imagining it must be something very bad indeed, that could extort a shout of applause from such an ignorant and foolish mob.

A sensible person never says an impertinent thing; nor ever does a foolish one. She thinks before she speaks. She deliberates before she acts. And she is blessed with such a happy and ready faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong, that she never says any thing she would wish to have unsaid; she never does any thing she would wish to have undone. Such, my Dear, is the character of a sensible person; or rather such would her character be, were she possessed of good sense in the highest perfection. But this, I doubt, is more than ever fell to the share of any individual of the human kind. The nearer, however, any one approaches to this standard, the more sensible is she to be esteemed: and the farther she deviates from it, the less sensible must she be accounted. Some are blessed with a greater, and some with a less share of this ta-

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lent;



lent; but without a competent share of it, or, at least, with the opposite extreme of folly, there can be no such thing as friendship. For, what friendship can you have with a fool? with one, whose mind is a mere blank, possessed of no sentiment, no idea, no notion of right or wrong; who is as incapable to distinguish good from evil, as a blind person is to judge of colours, or a deaf one of sounds. How can she be able to advise her friends, who has not sense enough to conduct herself? How can you possibly improve by the example of one, who has no consistency, no uniformity of character; or rather who has no character at all? who is guided by no principles, but is tossed about by every whim, humour, or caprice, that happens to strike her disordered fancy. What virtues can you ever learn from one, who herself is possessed of none? What vice or foible can you ever reform by the conversation of a person, whose own life is nothing but a confused medley of vice, folly, weakness and imperfection? In a word, a friendship with such a person could not possibly do you any good, but, very probably, would do you a great deal of harm.

Another circumstance, my dear Sophy, which you ought to attend to in the choice of your friend, is, that she be something superior to yourself in age, learning, knowledge, and experience. All these I join together, because, though not inseparable, they are commonly found to bear a proportion to one another. Without having lived some time in the world, we can have no knowledge; and without knowledge, we can have no experience. It must be confessed, indeed, that  
some

Some persons, blessed with a happy genius, and great opportunities of improvement, are more knowing at the age of twelve or fourteen, than others are at twenty. But these are rare instances, and do not affect the general rule; which is this, that the older any person is, she is always to be supposed to have the more knowledge and experience; taking it for granted, however, that she is endued with a tolerable capacity, and has had the advantage of a polite education.

Now, my Dear, a friendship, with a person of this character, with one who is older, and, of consequence, more knowing than yourself, cannot fail to be of great service to you on many occasions. If ever you should happen to be at a loss how to behave in any particular circumstances or situation of life; your friend, by her superior knowledge and experience, is capable to advise and direct you. If, in the course of your studies and education, you should meet with any difficulties above your comprehension, with any doubts which retard and interrupt your progress; your friend, by her greater learning, can soon resolve your doubts, remove every impediment, and render the way smooth and easy. In a word, the knowledge, learning, wisdom, and experience of your friend, will, in effect, become your own; because you may always use them with the same freedom as if they were your own property. And this, indeed, is one of the chief advantages of friendship, that between persons joined in this sacred union, all things are common.

But, my Dear, do not mistake me, I don't mean, that you ought to contract a friendship with one much older than yourself. This would be impossible. A great disparity of age is absolutely inconsistent with friendship. Between a person of sixteen and one of sixty, nay, between a person of twenty and one of forty, I don't think it could possibly exist. Their views and sentiments, their manner of living and thinking, their wishes, their hopes, their designs, their every thing is so very different, that they could hardly ever agree in any one particular. Neither do I mean, that you should never admit into your friendship any one, who is inferior to yourself in age or experience. Such a conduct would be equally ungenerous and imprudent: ungenerous, in refusing to those who are younger than yourself, what you expect from those who are older: imprudent, because, were every one to observe this maxim, you yourself could not possibly enjoy any of these advantages: you would have no opportunity of following the advice I now give you; no person superior to you in age, knowledge, and experience, would deign to receive you into her friendship.—All I mean is, that, whilst you are young and unexperienced, whilst you are more fit to receive than to give instruction, you ought to cultivate a friendship with those chiefly, or indeed only who are capable to give it; who, by their example and conversation, can make you both wiser and better. And, when once you are farther advanced in years; when you have acquired a stock of knowledge and experience, sufficient to assist and direct others; then you ought by all means

to do it: then you are bound, by all the ties of generosity, humanity, and justice, to perform the same good offices to the young and ignorant, which you yourself have formerly received from those who were superior to you in these respects.

The last advice, my dear Sophy, I shall give you with regard to the choice of your friend, is, that she be a person nearly equal to yourself in rank and station, in family and fortune; neither too much above you, nor too far before you. Without this equality, there may, indeed, be a kind of acquaintance; but there can be no intimacy or familiarity, and, of consequence, no friendship. Each particular station of life has a certain manner of thinking and acting peculiarly adapted to itself, and intirely different from every other. Thus, the nobility have one manner, the gentry another, the merchants a third, the tradesmen a fourth, and the farmers a fifth: besides a variety of other intermediate stations, for which we have no names. And these manners are so very different, that, should a person of the highest and one of the lowest rank happen to meet in a mixed company, they would hardly understand each other, unless the conversation turned upon such subjects as are understood by all the world. But that is not the conversation of friends. Theirs is something more particular, personal and interesting. Their pains and pleasures, their hopes and fears, their wishes and desires, their designs and schemes; in a word, whatever concerns their present or future happiness is naturally the subject of conversation among friends.

But,



But, my Dear, were it possible for you to contract a friendship with persons of too high or too low a station, yet is it a thing, which you ought carefully to avoid; as it might, and very probably would, be attended with many bad consequences. In the one case, you would be in danger of having your head filled with a thousand notions, which how proper soever they may be for a lady of the first quality, are altogether inconsistent with your rank. What in her would be deemed excusable, decent, or even praise-worthy; in you would be condemned as ridiculous, foolish, or, perhaps, criminal. When she goes to walk or visit, she may have a couple of footmen to attend her. She may go to the play, or any other public entertainment, every evening if she pleases, or at least as often as she thinks proper. She may throw away eight or ten guineas upon a head-dress that happens to hit her fancy. She may subscribe an annual sum to any charitable institution. For the last action all the world would praise her, and for the former ones no sensible person would blame her, as she acts in character, and has a fortune equal to her expences.

But, my dear, were you to behave in this manner, what a very different opinion, do you imagine, would people entertain of you? Why, some would suspect you were abandoned; others would think you were mad; and all would agree you were foolish. Your friends would be sorry; your enemies rejoice; and to the rest of the world you would be an object of ridicule and derision. Besides, to cultivate a friendship with such as are raised above us in rank or fortune,  
has

has a natural tendency to inspire us at once with pride and meanness of spirit; two vices so widely different, that they could hardly be supposed to reside in the same person. Of those who keep company with none but their betters, it is generally, and, I believe, justly observed, that they treat their superiors with servility and flattery, their equals with indifference, and their inferiors with contempt and disdain. But they are commonly repaid in their own coin: for the consequence of this behaviour is, that their inferiors hate them, their equals despise them, and their superiors laugh at them, when their backs are turned. In a word, you may, if you will, be the humble creature, the mean dependant; but you can never be the true, the bosom-friend of a lady of the first quality.

Nor would there be less danger, my dear, in the other case; I mean, in contracting a friendship with a person greatly beneath you in family and fortune. Your mind would be debased by her low conversation; your pride would be inflamed by her servile and cringing behaviour: for such only could you expect from her. As she courts you, not for your personal merit, but for your rank, your wealth and interest, she would take care never to forfeit your good graces by doing any disagreeable action, or telling any unpleasing truth, how much soever the doing the one, or telling the other, might be for your real interest and advantage. Your faults she would either conceal or extenuate; your virtues she would magnify and exaggerate; nay, perhaps, praise you for virtues you never possessed. She might, indeed, be your flattering sycophant,

phant, but she could not possibly be your faithful friend, one of whose principal duties it is to inform you of your faults, and to assist you in correcting them.

But, my Dear, not only is our pride encreased by cultivating a friendship with persons in low life; what is more, the very act of forming such a friendship is a certain proof of our original pride and vanity; for, if we had not been naturally proud, we never would have formed it. This, you will imagine, is a very strange way of thinking. What? can it ever be a sign of pride and vanity to cultivate a friendship with our inferiors? Is it not rather a mark of humility and condescension? Such, my Dear, will be your opinion; and such, I believe, is the opinion of half the world: but either they or I must be mistaken, or it is a very false opinion. For, where is the humility in keeping company with those who are perpetually flattering us? who, we are sure, will never venture to contradict us, but will commend and applaud every thing we say or do, however foolish or ridiculous? If this be humility, 'tis a very strange kind of it, and quite above my comprehension. The truth is, persons of this character are, of all others, the most proud, vain, and conceited. They don't like the company of their superiors, because they scorn to fawn or flatter; they don't like the company of their equals, because they cannot bear contradiction: and, therefore, they fly to the company of their inferiors, where they are free from contradiction, and, instead of offering, are sure of receiving the incense of flattery and adulation.

Of

Of this kind of pride, (for, it must be confessed, it has something very particular in it) lady Lambton is a remarkable instance. I went to visit her a few days ago, and found her surrounded with a large company of ladies, who, in every thing but sense, were certainly her inferiors. What the subject of conversation was before I enter'd, I know not; but the usual compliments were hardly over, when she took occasion to commend her daughter, who was settled at a country boarding-school, for her great improvement in writing; and, as a specimen of her abilities, produced a letter she had lately received from her. All the rest of the company agreed in praising it, tho' one half of them had not so much as seen it:—there was flattery for you with a witness. But I, who scorn to flatter any one, took the freedom to observe, that I thought it was very indifferent, and that my Sophy, tho' younger, could write much better; and as a proof, shewed them a letter of yours, which I happened to have in my pocket. Upon a comparison, they could not refuse giving the preference to you, tho' with apparent reluctance. After this, lady Lambton was extremely grave and demure, and the rest looked very silly and foolish. In any other company I would not have behaved in this manner; it would have been ill-manners; but such a conceited fool, and a parcel of such servile flatterers, deserved no better treatment. Her vanity and their meanness of spirit were equally the object of contempt and disdain.

Thus have I finished what I had to say on the subject of friendship. Perhaps I may have omit-



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ted several particulars. Indeed the subject is so extensive, that it cannot well be exhausted. But I hope I have mentioned every thing that is material, and explained all the principal qualifications of a true friend. And now, my Dear, if you can find a person, free from all the vices and foibles, and possessed of all the virtues and good qualities, which I have described; endeavour, by all means, to contract a friendship with her; and, when once you have done so, take care never to forfeit so great a blessing by your foolish and imprudent behaviour. For remember, that whatever accomplishments you expect to find in her, she has a right to expect the same in you; and therefore you ought to consider what I have said, not only as directions for the choice of a friend, but likewise as the rule of your own conduct. If you wish to have a person of merit for your friend, you must endeavour to be possessed of merit yourself; for, without this, you can never obtain so great a happiness; at least you can never enjoy it long. A person of sense and virtue will never enter into a friendship with one that is foolish or wicked; or, if she happens to do so inadvertently, which, however, is not very likely, she will soon break it off. Thus a friendship with a person of merit has a double tendency to improve your mind, both by the influence of her good example, and as it naturally prompts you to acquire those accomplishments, which may render you worthy of her regard and esteem.

If, therefore, my Dear, you want any of the virtues, or are guilty of any of the vices, which I have pointed out in this and the foregoing letters,

ters, let me advise you, as you value your own happiness, and would wish to enjoy the advantages of a virtuous friendship, immediately to set about the acquiring of the former, and the reforming of the latter; and with this view, propose to yourself the behaviour of the person you either have made or intend to make your friend, as an example of imitation. For 'tis an old and a just observation, that example has a greater influence upon our minds than precept, especially the example of one whom we esteem and love. When we learn virtue by precept, we don't know, till we make the experiment, whether it be practicable or not; but, when we learn it from example, we are certain that it is practicable, because we see it already practised. In precept we see only, as it were, the skeleton of virtue; in example we behold her animated and living. Farewell, my dear Sophy. May God Almighty bless you with every comfort of life, and, particularly, with a true friend. I am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LET.

## LETTER XIX.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Have all your letters on the subject of friendship lying by me, and have read them so frequently and so carefully, that, I believe, I could almost repeat them by heart. I am greatly obliged to you for the good advice and directions you have given me, and will endeavour to conduct myself accordingly. I never imagined, that so many qualifications were necessary to form the character of a true friend; but, upon reflection, I am fully convinced it must be so, and that every thing you have said is founded in reason and good sense.

There is one young lady here, and indeed but one, who seems to answer the character you have drawn. She is, I think, free from all the vices and foibles, and possessed of all the virtues and good qualities, which you have described. Besides, she has always taken a particular pleasure in my company and conversation, as, indeed, I have ever done the same in hers. We have a mutual regard and esteem for each other, which it shall not be my fault, if I do not soon improve into a settled and confirmed friendship. And, what is a very lucky circumstance, she is to leave the boarding-school, and come to town  
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much about the same time with me, which you said would be in a few months. This, however, I don't mention from any desire of changing my situation, sooner than you think proper; but only to shew you, that by this means, I shall have it in my power to continue and cultivate that friendship in town, which I can only begin here. I have no more to add, but to offer my duty to my Papa and you, and my love to my sisters and brothers. I am, dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

LET.



## LETTER XX.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Received your letter last week, and am glad to hear, that amongst twenty or thirty young ladies, (for I don't think your school exceeds that number) you can find even one properly qualified for being your friend. When you come to London, you will not find one in five hundred. But, my Dear, do not mistake me. I don't mean to reflect upon our own sex in particular, nor on the world in general; far from it: nor would I have you to be of a jealous, suspicious, and distrustful disposition, which is always a sign of a weak head or a bad heart. All I mean is, that you will find very few properly qualified for being *your friends in particular*. This requires, besides sense and virtue, the foundation and ground-work of all friendship, a concurrence of so many other circumstances, such as age, fortune, disposition, &c. that 'tis no wonder if a person, possessed of all these qualifications, is rarely to be found.

But tho' I would not have you to be jealous and suspicious, yet I would advise you to be very cautious and prudent, in the choice of your friends; because, when once you have made your choice, it will hardly be in your power to alter it; at least the doing so might be attended with many inconveniences. People would be  
apt

apt to accuse you either of folly or fickleness. For, had not you been foolish, you never would have contracted a friendship with persons that did not merit your esteem; nor, unless you were inconstant, would you ever abandon those who do. It is always much easier to prevent an evil, than to cure it.

You can never incur the displeasure of any person, at least of any sensible person, by declining her friendship; but, by breaking and dissolving a friendship already formed, you will certainly create to yourself a great many enemies. For, every friend, whom you have thus forsaken and abandoned, will probably become your enemy; and, if she is not possessed of greater lenity and mildness of temper, than falls to the share of most young ladies, she will revenge the affront, by betraying all your secrets. But, though I think it extremely probable, that she will act in this manner, yet I am very far from approving of her conduct; nor would I advise you to imitate her example, should you ever have the misfortune to be forsaken by any of your friends. In such a case, 'tis best to behave with perfect indifference, and thereby to shew that you are as regardless of them as they can possibly be of you. But, with respect to what secrets they may have imparted to you, during the course of your friendship, let these be sacred and inviolable; these are not to be disclosed on any account whatever: no, not even tho' they should be so base and ungenerous as to discover yours. If they are guilty of one crime, (and indeed it is one of the worst of crimes,) that is no reason why you should be guilty of another. By this means,

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means, you will procure the love and esteem of every one that knows you, whilst they incur the hatred of all the world. Your conduct will be praised; theirs will be condemned: your friendship will be courted; theirs will be shunned. In a word, by this strict observance of the sacred laws of friendship, and acting agreeably to the precepts of virtue, you will punish their perfidy more effectually, than if you had given way to your resentment, and paid them in their own coin.

With regard to your coming to town, I have settled that matter with your aunt Lumley. You are to live in her family, where you will have an opportunity of seeing a great deal of company. Perhaps I may not write to you again, till your arrival in London: if I do, it will only be about some private affairs. In any event I will expect a letter from you as soon as you are thoroughly fixed in your new quarters. Your papa, your brothers and sisters join me in offering our love to you. I am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XXI.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**I**N obedience to your commands, I now sit down to write to you. I have been in town, you know, for several weeks past, and live very happily. My aunt is very kind and civil, and my cousins are very agreeable and obliging. But, Mamma, what an infinite difference is there between this and my former situation! such crowds of company, such variety of diversions, such visiting, gaming, and I don't know what,—that I almost imagine I am entered into another world! And then, Mamma, when we go to visit on foot (for we sometimes chuse to walk both for pleasure and exercise) what multitudes of people in the streets, of all ranks and conditions, from the king to the beggar! and they all seem to be equally great, at least in their own opinion: for the ragged cinder-wench will take the wall of the finest lady in town. How different is this from the country! There we never passed by a farmer's house, but the daughters all courtesied to us; but it is not so here, instead of that, we are frequently in danger of being tossed into the kennel. The streets too have such windings, turnings, and doublings, that it is surprising how people can find their way: I am sure were I left without a guide, I should be more afraid of  
losing



losing myself in London, than in Papa's wilderness. Besides, the town itself must certainly be very large; for I have gone with my cousins to all the different parts of it, to view the remarkable places and curiosities; but I never yet saw an end of it: one would imagine it had no end at all.

Whether or not I shall like this manner of life, I cannot yet tell: for I have not had time to think of it seriously; my spirits have been kept up in such a perpetual hurry and flutter, by the number and novelty of the objects, that strike the eye in every part of this great city. Thus much, however, I plainly perceive already, that I shall have greater occasion for your advice and direction now, than ever I had before. I find I shall be less able to conduct myself in London at the age of fifteen, than I was in the country at nine or ten; so that, I am afraid, I shall be obliged to trouble you with too many letters.

My aunt Lumley, indeed, seems to be a lady of so much prudence and discretion, that, I believe, I might safely rely on her judgment in every thing: and, to be sure, I will never fail to consult her on all occasions; and, in most matters, will be intirely determined by her advice. But, both for the satisfaction of my own mind, and from a sense of duty, I will never venture to do any thing of importance, without first hearing your opinion, which I hope you will continue to give me with your usual kindness and condescension.

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In your next I beg you would give me your sentiments of the rules proper to be observed in conversation. My reason for asking this, is, that my aunt will hardly allow any of us young people to open our mouths in company. She says we ought to sit silent, and hear; and never speak, except when a question is put to us. Now this is so different from our manner in the country, where we used to talk and chatter as much as we pleased, that I must own, it makes me look very silly; for, I imagine, it requires some art, even to sit silent with a good grace. I have got a great many other questions to ask you; but with these I will not trouble you, till I receive your answer to this. Please to present my duty to my Papa, and my love to my brothers and sisters. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XXII.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**I** Received yours a few weeks ago, and am extremely glad to hear that you live so happily with your aunt and cousins. I dare say it will not be their fault, if you don't continue to do so, and I hope it will never be yours. I could not help smiling at your humorous, or rather natural, description of London; for such as you have described it, it must certainly appear to all young people on their first arrival. But the sense of novelty will soon wear off: you will behold the different objects with less surprize every day; till at last, when they are become perfectly familiar, you will view them with the same indifference, that you used to do the trees and fields in the country.

This surprize, indeed, which seizes most young people, on their first coming to town, has a very fatal effect upon weak minds. It occasions such a dissipation of spirits as banishes all serious thought and employment; and, if it is not corrected in time, frequently grows into a confirmed habit of levity and idleness. But, I hope this will not be your fate; I am confident it will not; your own good sense will prevent it: or, if that should fail, the admonitions of your aunt, and the example of your cousin Lumley, who is a very prudent young lady, will effectually preserve you.

you. By these two guides, my Dear, namely the advice of the one, and the example of the other, I would have you to regulate your conduct entirely. If you do, you will be in little danger of committing any great or capital mistakes. You will be guilty of few errors, of fewer faults, and hardly ever of any crime at all.

What you say with regard to its being more difficult to conduct yourself in London at the age of fifteen, than it was in the country at nine or ten, is extremely just. In the country, the temptations to vice are so few, that unless a person be naturally of a very bad disposition, she cannot go astray from the paths of virtue; but in town, the allurements to vice are so many and so strong, that, to be able to withstand them all, a young lady must be endued by nature with a good heart and a clear head; she must be assisted and directed by the prudent advice of her elders, and the virtuous example of her equals; and she must have the modesty and good sense to listen to the former, and to imitate the latter. All these advantages, however, you happily enjoy, and, I hope, you will not fail to make a proper use of them.

The opinion you entertain of your aunt is extremely well founded. She is certainly a lady of great prudence and discretion, and, in every respect, as capable to advise and direct you, as I can pretend to be. In matters, indeed, relating to the town, she is more so, as she is much better acquainted with its present customs and fashions. But, whenever you chuse to consult me about any thing, you may always expect to receive my best advice.

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As to the rules, my dear, which ought to be observed in conversation, they are many and various. I shall endeavour to explain them to you in this and the following letter; for it is a matter of great importance for every young lady, to understand them perfectly, and to practise them carefully. So much of our time is spent in conversation, that she who is either ignorant or negligent of these rules, must make a very awkward and ridiculous figure in company.

But first of all, my dear, let me observe, that your aunt has acted very wisely in enjoining you and your cousins a profound silence, except when a question is put to you.——You must learn to think, before you presume to speak: and the best, the only, way for this, is to sit silent, and to listen, with attention, to the conversation of those, who are older and wiser than yourself. In the country, indeed, you might chatter and prattle as much as you pleased, because there you was in the company of your equals. But now the case is altered. You are now admitted into the company of your superiors, of those, I mean, who are superior to you in age, sense, knowledge, experience, and indeed, in every thing, but rank and fortune. It is therefore your duty, my dear, to sit mute, and to profit and improve by their wise reflections, and judicious remarks. And, when once you are considerably improved, when once you have stored and furnished your mind with a sufficient stock of knowledge, for bearing a part in rational conversation, then, to be sure, you may speak: then your aunt will not hinder you to talk in company,

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on the contrary, I know she will invite you to it, and listen to you with pleasure.

But this, my dear, is an honour to which you could never attain, were you permitted to speak in company too early: for, by this means, you would be cut off from all opportunities of improvement. Perpetually prattling and tattling yourself, how could you possibly attend to, or profit by the conversation of others? In a word, were you allowed to talk in company too early, the consequence would be, that you would never be able to talk in it at all, with any kind of sense or propriety. She that affects to be a woman too soon, is likely to continue a child all her life.

Lady Danvers is a striking instance of this. By the foolish fondness of her parents, she was admitted into company at the age of seven, and because, forsooth, she said some very smart things, (so her parents imagined, tho' no body else could perceive it) she was allowed to talk with all the freedom and assurance of one of seventeen. But, unhappily, as she could not come up (smart as she was) to the rational conversation of the company, they were obliged, in complaisance, to come down to her low prattle; by which means she continues to prattle to this day. For how could she possibly learn to do otherwise? Her parents were so complaisant to her, and the company that frequented the house, were so complaisant to the parents, that, for several years, miss never heard any thing above her own tittle-tattle; and, when afterwards she happened to fall into other companies, less polite, or rather more sensible, her mind was so over-run with ignorance and pride, that she either could not understand,

stand, or would not attend to the subject of conversation. The persons she chose for her friends and companions, you may believe, were such as could prattle like herself, or perhaps could do nothing but prattle; so that their example, instead of reclaiming, served only to confirm her in her old habit of trifling and impertinence. Thus in body she is a woman, in soul she is a child. To the smart and witty she is an object of ridicule and derision; because she does not seem to be sensible of her own weakness: to the humane and good-natured she is an object of pity and compassion, because, had it not been for the foolish indulgence of her parents, she might have proved a very accomplished woman. Such, my dear, are the fatal effects of allowing young people to talk in company too early; and from hence, I dare say, you will be convinced, that your aunt acts very wisely in denying you that liberty, at least for some time.

After all, I don't mean that you should be kept silent too long. This might bring on a habit of diffidence and bashfulness, which perhaps you would never afterwards be able to correct. But when, in what company, and on what subjects, you may begin to talk, your aunt is the proper judge: to her orders you must cheerfully submit in this and in every thing else. The rules necessary to be observed in polite conversation, shall be explained in my next letter. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

L E T-

## LETTER XXIII.

My dear SOPHIA,

**L**AST week I received a letter from your aunt, in which she expresses her entire satisfaction, with every part of your conduct. She says you discover so much modesty, discretion, and good sense, that she intends to let you take a share in the conversation very soon. Allow me, therefore, as I promised in my last, to mention a few rules, by the observance of which you cannot fail to render yourself an agreeable companion.

First of all, then, my Dear, take care never to interrupt any person when she is speaking. This is the height of ill-manners. If she talks longer than she ought, and even deserves to be interrupted, yet be not you the first to do it. That will come with a better grace from one of greater age and experience. If she is guilty of one fault, that is no reason why you should be guilty of another. If you have a reflection to make upon any thing she has said, you must reserve it till the end of the story; tho' perhaps you may imagine it would have come in with greater propriety in the middle of it. If the remark would have been very pertinent then, it will not be impertinent now; but if it appears to be trifling here, you may be assured it would not have been very sensible even there. By this means, you will, at once discover your prudence and discretion, and insensibly acquire a habit of

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retaining and examining your thoughts, before you throw them out in conversation.

I am the more anxious, my Dear, to caution you against this practice of interrupting people in the middle of their discourse, because it is an error, which young persons, from the natural heat of their temper and the vivacity of their spirits, are most apt to commit. Your friend is telling a story. In consequence of something she says, a good thought strikes your fancy; out it comes, for you can contain yourself no longer. —Your friend is stopt.—The rest of the company smile.—And yet perhaps your remark was very smart and witty. But was it really, do you think, or could it possibly be, so very smart and witty, as to apologize for your ill-manner in interrupting your friend? Every sensible person will tell you that it could not.

There is another fault, my Dear, nearly a kin to the former, and which you ought to avoid with the same care and diligence; and that is, the custom of anticipating any person who is speaking, never allowing her to finish a single sentence, but supplying the last two or three words yourself. The only shadow of excuse that can be offered for this practice, is, that it shews you are attending to what is said. But, if this be the only proof of your giving attention, it is a very ill-bred one; and perhaps it would be as good manners to give no attention at all. It is, in effect, saying to a person, that she cannot tell her own story; or, at least, that, if you understood her meaning, you could express it much better: than which, I don't know if you can offer any one a greater affront. I have seen some  
people

people so provoked at this unmannerly treatment, as to stop short in the middle of their story; and others, who, though perhaps they were going to use the very same words with the person who prevented them, yet, upon observing their ill-manners, scorned to do so; but, to mortify their pride, expressed themselves in terms different from what they originally intended. This, indeed, is the gentlest reproof, that can be given to such persons; and this reproof, at least, ought always to be given to every one, who is guilty of so much rudeness and ill-breeding.

Another rule, my Dear, which you ought carefully to observe is, never to take up too much of the conversation yourself, and far less to engross the whole of it. This, even in persons of the greatest age, knowledge, and experience, must appear ridiculous; but, in one so young, so ignorant, and so unexperienced as you are, it would be condemned as the height of arrogance and presumption. Indeed, every one seems to be entitled to a greater or less share of the conversation, in proportion to her years and knowledge: but no person, let her years and knowledge be what they will, has a right to the whole of it; nor should any one, however young and ignorant, be entirely excluded. This would destroy the very end of conversation, which is mutually to impart and receive knowledge, pleasure, and improvement. For, what knowledge or improvement can she possibly receive, who is always talking herself, and never allows the rest of the company to open their mouths? Or what pleasure can they enjoy, who are condemned to a profound silence, and have their ears perpetually

ally stunned with the noise of the same tongue. If, indeed, they could enjoy any pleasure in such circumstances, they must be endued with great patience and humility; greater, I am afraid, than fall to the share of any individual of the human kind.

Still, however, it is certain, that young ladies should be more apt to hear than to speak. They are more fit to learn than to teach. It is their business rather to acquire than communicate knowledge. And, by a young lady's behaviour in this respect, you may form a pretty just notion of her prudence and discretion in general; for the greater share she possesses of these good qualities, the more will she be disposed to listen, and the less forward to talk: but when you observe any one more inclined to talk herself, than to attend to the discourse of others, you may safely conclude, that her stock of sense and wisdom is very scanty and small. A young lady's conversation, I think, should chiefly consist in asking some necessary questions, or making some pertinent reflections upon what is said; and seldom, if ever, should she venture to introduce any new subject of discourse. This will, at once, discover her modesty, the most amiable quality in young people, and be the means of cultivating and improving her mind, much better than it could possibly be in any other way. For, of all kinds of knowledge, that which we gain by enquiry is received into the mind with the greatest pleasure, and retained with the greatest care. Having felt the want of it, and being sensible of its value and importance, we are not likely ever to let it slip out of our memory.

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But if, at any time, you should take the liberty of telling a story in company, as doubtless you may in a year or two hence, let me advise you to observe the following rules. Beware of rambling from one subject to another, which is always a sign of a weak and confused head. Let your story be short, otherwise you will fall into the error I have condemned above. Tell it distinctly and accurately, mentioning all the material circumstances, and none but such as are so; and even upon these do not dwell too long: if you do, you will be in danger of losing the thread of your story, and perhaps not be able to finish what you had begun. A person travelling on the highway may safely divert herself with a view of all the remarkable by-paths, and even turn aside into them a little for the sake of a better prospect; but if, charmed with the beauty of the landscape, or forgetful of her intended journey, she proceeded too far, she may bewilder herself, and never be able to recover the main road.

Another maxim, my dear Sophy, which you ought to observe in conversation, is, never to contradict any one, unless it be in your own defence, or that of your absent friend; and, even then, you may do it in such a manner as to give no offence, at least to any sensible person. You may observe, that you apprehend the lady is misinformed, or give some other gentle insinuation, which your own prudence and discretion will readily suggest. But, in matters of indifference, it is better not to contradict any person at all: because it might occasion disputes; which are very indecent in any company, but most of all in the company



company of ladies. For those who are most apt to say exceptionable things, are least able to bear contradiction. The same weakness of mind which leads them to the former, disqualifies them for the latter. They are ignorant, and therefore they commit errors; they are proud, and therefore they will persist in them. Above all, never contradict any person merely for the sake of contradiction. This would betray a bad heart. It were to take pleasure in other people's pain; to mortify your companion, without any prospect of advantage to yourself.

Never affect to be smart and witty in your reflections. This might create you a great many enemies; but could never procure you one single friend. Nay, perhaps, it might make you lose those whom you already have: for a professed wit, in her extravagant flights and sallies, spares neither friend nor foe. The giddy and thoughtless might admire you; the vicious and wicked would hate and abhor you; and even the good and virtuous would dread and shun you: for virtue itself is hardly secure from the poisonous darts of malignant wit. If you have a natural fund of wit, conceal it as much as possible; or if it must sometimes appear, let it always be seasoned with humanity and good-nature. But if you have no natural turn for it, never affect it. All kinds of affectation are ridiculous; but that of wit is doubly so. By endeavouring to make others laugh, you yourself will become the object of ridicule and derision.

In company, never speak ill of any absent person, whether friend, stranger, or enemy. The first would be base, the second unjust, and the

the last low and mean-spirited. By speaking ill of your absent friends, you deserve to lose, and certainly would lose, both them and those who are present; for who, in their senses, would cultivate a friendship with one guilty of so much perfidy and baseness? By speaking ill of strangers, you would make all the world your foes; for she who without the least provocation, can asperse the character of those, with whom she has little acquaintance and no connexion, deserves to be the object of universal hatred and detestation. By inveighing against your absent enemies, you would discover the most contemptible meanness of spirit and littleness of mind; and, if it should come to their ears, might flatter their pride and vanity too much, by making them imagine, that they had ruffled your temper more than perhaps they had really done, or at least than you should give them an opportunity of knowing.

I am the more concerned, my Dear, to caution you against this vice, because it is generally said to prevail most in the company of ladies. I wish I could say the imputation were unjust; I hope it is; but to deny it flatly would be too presumptuous in me, who, for several years past, have been so little conversant in the polite world. For you know, that, of late, I have hardly minded any thing else but the affairs of my own family; and, in the management of these, I think, my time has been more usefully and honourably employed, than it could possibly have been in any other way.

All I can say, is, that, if this abominable practice (for I can call it no better) be general, I have always endeavoured to be an exception to it myself.

self. I never did, to the best of my knowledge, injure the character of any individual person; nay, I have left several companies, that I might not have my ears offended, nor my mind polluted, with the hellish sound of calumny and detraction. You will think, my Dear, that I talk in a very high strain; and so I do; but I do it for this reason, that I may inspire you with an utter aversion and abhorrence of this infernal vice.

I don't mention my own conduct, my Dear, from the principle of pride and vanity. My only intention is to propose it to you as a pattern of imitation. I hope you will never think it beneath you to imitate the conduct of your mother——Let me not entertain a suspicion so unworthy of my dear child.——I know you never will. I am convinced, on the contrary, you will take a pleasure and a pride in following my advice and example.

Let me therefore advise you, my dear Sophy; let me persuade you, never to speak an ill word of any absent person whatever, nor even to keep company with those who are guilty of this detestable crime. If you should happen to hear any expression dropt in company, that favours, the least, of calumny and detraction, seem at first to overlook it; but, if the conversation begin to run entirely in this dirty channel, then fly from the company outright—fly from it as you would fly from a plague—for as certainly as the one would infect your body, so certainly will the other infect your mind. Still, however, you may leave it in a polite and genteel manner, on the pretence of business, of some other engagement,



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ment, or the like; for, tho' they hardly deserve to be treated with so much ceremony, you ought always to remember what is due to your own character. Because they are ill-natured, you are not therefore to be ill-bred. Such companies as these, my Dear, you are in no danger of seeing at your aunt's, nor in the whole circle of her acquaintance. With people of this stamp she would disdain to have any kind of intercourse or correspondence. She would scorn to pay them any visits, and she would take care not to receive any from them. Would to God there were no such people in the world! I hope there are few; but still I am afraid, there are some; and into their company you may, sometimes, happen to fall, by mere chance. On all these occasions, let me entreat you to follow the directions I have given above.

Another rule, my dear Sophy, which you ought to observe in conversation, is, never to say any thing, that may give pain or uneasiness to any one of the company. By this I don't mean any of the errors, which I have described and condemned above. All these, to be sure, give pain and uneasiness to the persons that suffer by them; but then they do so in plain and open terms, and, of consequence, may be the more easily corrected or refuted. What I mean, at present, is, that you ought never to say any thing, that seems to reflect, even in the most distant manner, upon the faults or foibles of any of the company, or of their absent friends. If this proceeds from malice, it betrays a bad heart; if from want of thought, it discovers a weak head: and the ill-natured and foolish are



equally unqualified for the delicate intercourse of polite conversation.

The last advice, my Dear, which I shall give you on this subject, is, never to appear to be absent in company, or inattentive to the person who is speaking. This is always a sign of intolerable pride, or of great weakness. Some people are so full of themselves, that they disdain to listen to the conversation of others. Their minds are puffed up with such a high opinion of their own good sense, that they think it below them, forsooth, to attend to, what they imagine, the nonsense of other people. Such vain and conceited fools should be excluded from all companies, condemned to perpetual solitude, and obliged to converse with those only whom they esteem; that is, with their own dear selves. But this absence of thought, this want of attention, is not always the effect of pride. It is sometimes owing to the mind's being strongly possessed with some violent passion, which swallows up, as it were, all the faculties of the soul, and renders it insensible to every other impression. One in this situation shall be so far from attending to the person who is speaking, that, even when she is spoke to, she will hardly understand you. She starts, like one roused out of a dream, and wonders where she is, or what the company have been doing. All that can be said for such people, is, that they are more the objects of pity than contempt. They are labouring under a violent disease of the mind, and should no more venture into company, than if they were in a raging fever. There is another source of this habit of inattention: it sometimes proceeds from

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a constitutional weakness, incident to giddy and thoughtless minds, which can never fix, for ten minutes, upon the same object, but must be always fluttering from one trifle to another. A person of this character can neither tell a story herself, nor attend to one that is told by another. To confine her attention to the same subject, or to make her thoughts run in the same channel for a quarter of an hour together, would be a kind of imprisonment which she could not bear. All her pleasure lies in perpetual change and variety, and that she would not forego on any account whatever. Of all these different kinds of inattention, the last is certainly the most excusable, and perhaps the easiest to be cured; for, being commonly the effect of youth, it will, of consequence, wear off as the person advances in years.

These, my Dear, are some of the principal maxims, which you ought to carefully observe in company; and if you do, you will be in little danger of committing any great or capital blunders. There are, besides, some other rules of less consequence; but these depend so much on the different humours and characters of different companies, that they must be left entirely to the suggestions of your own prudence and discretion. Please to make my kind compliments to your aunt and cousins. I even am wot

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XXIV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**B**Y your last letter I am fully convinced of what you told me some time ago, that you take as much pleasure in bestowing favours upon me, as I can possibly do in receiving them; otherwise you would never be at so much pains, to advise and direct me in all the different parts of my conduct. You may be assured, I will cheerfully follow the good advice and sensible instructions you have given me with regard to my behaviour in company; and, as my aunt now allows me to take a share in the conversation, I shall have an opportunity of putting them in daily practice.—The next thing, my dear Mamma, in which I would beg your advice, is, the article of dress; for in this, I think, my aunt is rather too severe. It is true, she allows us to dress in a very genteel and elegant manner, but will not permit us to spend so much time in it, as I know some other young ladies do. My cousins and I have been teasing her, for several days past, to let us follow a new fashion, which is just come into vogue; but she absolutely refuses to give her consent. She says it is as ridiculous to be the first in adopting a new fashion, as it is to be the last in laying an old one aside.—She is likewise, I think, rather too rigid with regard to our diversions. Indeed, we sometimes go to the play, the

the opera, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall; but then it is always in the company of an elderly gentlewoman, who sticks as close by us as if we were children, and could not walk by ourselves. But all our importunities have not been able to prevail upon her to let us go to Sadler's-Wells, or Marybone. She says, if ever we go to these places, which she very much doubts, we must have more prudence and discretion, than we yet seem to have: that she would almost be ashamed to accompany us herself; and, where she is ashamed to appear, we ought to be afraid.

As to diversions within doors, we have but few. My aunt does not seem to be so fond of gaming as some other ladies of her acquaintance; and even when there is a party, she seldom admits any of us young people into it: or, if she does, she never allows us, on any account, to play for money. Pray, Mamma, give me your opinion of all these matters in your next. At present I have no more to add, but to entreat you to present my duty to my papa, to accept the same yourself, and to offer my kind love to my sisters and brothers. My aunt and cousins present their compliments to you and the rest of the family. I ever am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

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## LETTER XXV.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

I Had the pleasure of yours a few weeks ago. The town, I see, has inspired you with new notions of dress and diversions, to which, whilst you lived in the country, you was a perfect stranger. This, my Dear, is no more than I expected. I knew it would be the case; but I knew, at the same time, that you had too strong a sense of duty and obedience to take any step in these matters, without the advice of your mother. This, however, is, in a great measure, rendered superfluous by the wise conduct of your aunt, who, in this, as in every thing else, has acted with the greatest prudence and discretion. Nor do I see how you can accuse her of severity. She allows you, by your own confession, to dress as elegantly and genteelly as you please. And what more would you have? I hope you would not wish to dress in a gaudy and indecent manner. I am sure you do not. You have too much modesty and good sense to be guilty of an action so very foolish and imprudent.

I must be so plain, my Dear, or, if you will, so old-fashioned, as to tell you, that the first and original intention of cloaths was to defend the body from cold; and, therefore, nothing can be more unnatural, than to dress in such a manner, as to leave the neck and breast, the most tender  
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and delicate parts of it, exposed to all the inclemency and severity of the weather. This custom must certainly be very pernicious to the health. I verily believe, that nineteen in twenty of the diseases incident to our sex, are owing to this foolish manner of dressing.

It is, I think, generally allowed, that most of our distempers are occasioned by colds; and what way so likely to catch cold as to leave the most sensible parts of the body almost, if not entirely naked? But such is the irresistible power of vanity, that, let the consequence be what it will, be it colds, diseases, or even death itself, giddy and thoughtless creatures must and will follow the fashion. What a ridiculous thing it is for a young lady to keep her room for weeks together, in order to get the better of a cold, and yet the moment she appears in public again, to run the risk of catching a new cold, by dressing in this careless shall I call it, or rather indecent manner? Such persons act literally according to the old proverb "that it is better to be out of the world than out of fashion." Rather than not live according to the present mode, they would wish not to live at all. They prefer the good opinion of the vain and giddy part of the world to all regards of health, and even of life itself.

All that can be said for these people, is, that, since they will be foolish, they must even reap the fruits of their own folly. Let them, in the name of goodness, follow the fashion; but let them remember, at the same time, that, if the fashion be contrary to reason, they must of consequence be sickly and miserable; whereas, by following their own judgment, instead of the

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vain opinion of the world, they might at once preserve their health and happiness. And which of the two, do you think, acts the wiser part? she, who, in the midst of winter, can walk the Mall in all the bloom and beauty of health, tho' a little out of the fashion? or she, who, from a silly attachment to the mode, lies pining and languishing on a sick (if not on a death) bed? The one lives a noble monument of the blessed effects of reason and wisdom; the other dies a wretched victim to the power of vanity and fashion. These two characters are so very opposite in their nature, and so different in their consequences, that, I dare say, the bare mention of them is more than sufficient to determine your choice.

Nor, my Dear, is this foolish custom more destructive of health, than it is inconsistent with modesty, which is one of the greatest ornaments of the female sex. Dress has been frequently, and, I believe, justly considered as an indication of the inward dispositions of the mind. A modest and decent dress bespeaks the wearer to be a person of sense and sobriety. A gaudy and affected one betrays a weak head, or a licentious heart.

I don't say, my Dear, that this is an infallible rule of judging. I am sure it is not; it cannot. But still I believe there is something in it, and I know the generality of mankind are apt to place a great deal in it; so very much indeed, that I remember once to have seen a young lady of unblemished character mistaken for a woman of bad fame, for no other reason in the world, than because her dress was a little too showy and flaunting.



haunting. One evening, as she was returning from a visit, a young gentleman walked up to her, and addressed her in a very familiar style; but upon her giving him a rebuff, he begged her ten thousand pardons, and told her, that, if she would not expose herself to the like insults for the future, she must never dress in that gaudy and indecent manner: and indeed, methinks, no virtuous person would chuse to incur the bare suspicion of immodesty, for the sake of any fashion whatever.

Let me, therefore, advise you, my dear Sophy, to take particular care, that your dress be always conducive to health, and consistent with modesty. If it want either of these properties, it can never be said to be well chosen: nay, I will venture to affirm it can never be elegant: for, let superficial thinkers say what they will, nothing can be elegant that is contrary to reason and common sense.

Another end of dress seems to have been to distinguish the one sex from the other; and therefore the more distinct their dresses are, so much the better. The women should no more adopt the habit of the men, than the men should adopt the habit of the women. For a lady to assume the coat and periwig, the hat and feather, is as ridiculous as for a man to appear in petticoats. And yet, I am sorry to say it, this distinction of sex seems to be very little regarded by our modern fine ladies. On meeting a company on horseback now-a-days, one shall hardly be able to distinguish, at first sight, whether it is composed of ladies or gentlemen.

and yet (though this is a very common error) I re-



I remember a curious story of our coachman John, who, you know, is no fool neither, concerning one of these (I don't know well how to call them, I think your papa says they should be called) Amazons. A person, elegantly dressed and mounted on a fine horse, asked him one day, if such a town, pointing to it, was not Manchester; to which he answered with a low bow, "Yes, Sir." But, upon a second question, if he knew in what particular street Mrs. Middleton's boarding-school lay, as she wanted to call upon her husband's niece, who was settled there; John perceiving his error, and observing her dress more narrowly, replied, with a kind of blush and hesitation, "No—M—Madam."

I know these female cavaliers allege, in their own defence, that this masculine habit is by far the most convenient for riding; but suppose it were so, can that be ever allowed to be a sufficient apology for the indecency of it! A modest lady, methinks, would chuse never to appear on horseback at all, rather than lay aside such a material distinction of her sex.

But, my Dear, convenience is not the only motive to this ridiculous custom. There is another and a stronger motive too, though perhaps these ladies will be ashamed to acknowledge it; nor indeed should I take notice of it, were it not that, in laying down rules for the direction of your conduct, I think it my duty to mention every thing, that may tend to your information and instruction. They think, by this means, to recommend themselves more effectually to the love and admiration of the men; in which, (if I may believe your papa and uncle) they are greatly

greatly mistaken. For they tell me, that a man no more likes to see a woman strutting in a coat and hat, than a woman would be pleased to see a man swimming along in a gown and capuchin. It is inconsistent with that delicacy and softness, which is one of the greatest beauties and ornaments of the female sex; and which is infinitely more winning and engaging, than all the smart and masculine airs assumed by these cavalier-like ladies. Let me, therefore, flatter myself, my dear Sophy, that you will never give into a practice, at once so indecent and unnatural.

Your aunt's observation, "that it is as ridiculous to be the first in adopting a new fashion, as to be last in laying an old one aside," is extremely just. The former is always a sign of fickleness and vanity: the latter, of pride and stiffness. Those ladies, whom the men commonly distinguish by the name of coquettes, are most apt to fall into the first error; and the pruders, as they are usually called, into the last; and a woman of sense would no more chuse to pass for the one than the other.

To be extremely fond of inventing and adopting new fashions, is, in effect, to say, that all fashions are indifferent; that they depend entirely upon fancy and humour, and have nothing in them of reason or common sense. On the other hand, to be very tenacious of an old fashion, and to condemn all kind of innovations, is no less ridiculous. It is saying, in other words, that one fashion only can be right, and every other must be wrong; that it depends entirely upon reason, and has dothing to do with fancy and taste. Both these ways of thinking are equally false,  
and

and the truth lies in the middle between them. Fashion neither depends upon reason entirely, nor upon fancy entirely, but partly upon each.

My design in making these observations, is, to let you see, that as no person should think she discovers great ingenuity in being the inventor of a new fashion, so no lady should imagine she shews her good sense in retaining an old one, when it is laid aside by every body else.

Follow the fashion then, my Dear, by all means, in things that are harmless and indifferent. To do otherwise, instead of shewing your good sense, would only discover an obstinacy in trifles, which is always a sure sign of a fool. But never follow it, when it is inconsistent with decency and modesty. Some people, indeed, might call this an easiness of temper, and a due deference to the world; but I must own I should give it a very different and a much worse name; I should not be afraid to call it want of understanding, or even want of virtue.

But, though I think it very proper that you should follow the mode, yet I would still advise you to have some regard, in the choice of your dress, to your stature, shape, features, and complexion: for it is a most foolish conceit to imagine, that the same fashion will suit all complexions equally well. Nature has diversified the human countenance with such an infinite variety, that perhaps there never were any two faces exactly alike; and therefore it should seem to follow, that no two dresses should be exactly alike neither; at least, if they are so, they can never be equally proper. What I mean is, that every young lady, at the same time that she follows



follows the fashion, should study to adapt her dress to the peculiarities of her shape, features, and complexion. It is for want of this distinction, and from a blind and injudicious attachment to the mode, that so many thoughtless creatures destroy the little beauty nature has given them; and, instead of correcting or softening the peculiarities of their countenance, render themselves perfectly ridiculous by their silly and childish affectation.

A lady, whose face is a little inclined to be long, might look extremely well, would she only be content to remain as nature made her. But a high head-dress comes into vogue, and she must have one to be sure, as well as others, and perhaps one of the highest too; by which means the natural length of her face, which at first was very consistent with beauty, is drawn out to such an immoderate degree, that what was originally no more than a peculiarity, is now converted into downright deformity. And thus too it happens in a thousand other cases.

The truth is, the wise and the foolish equally follow the fashion; but with this material difference, that the former do it only in as far as it tends to render their persons more decent, handsome, and beautiful; whereas the latter have little or no regard to these considerations. They follow it blindly and implicitly, though it should make them more shapeless, ugly, and deformed: they are in the fashion, and that's enough.

Another advice, my dear Sophy, I would give you, is this, never affect to be at the top of the fashion. It is owing to this silly affectation, that fashions are so fleeting and changeable; for, whilst every one endeavours to outvie her neighbour,



bour, they carry the fashion to such an extravagant length, that at last it becomes perfectly ridiculous: and when they have made it so, they naturally run into the opposite extreme, where they will not continue long neither; but, when they are grown weary of it, they will invent some other fashion; and thus they are perpetually running round in an endless circle of folly and trifling.

I have been frequently diverted with your grand mamma's observations on the hoop-petticoats. She says, when they first came into fashion, they were tolerably decent; but, by the silly ambition of the ladies to excel one another, they at last swelled to such an immoderate size, that she has seen many a little diminutive creature, inclosed in one of these huge circles, much broader than she was long.

But, I think, you have another cause of complaint. Your aunt, you say, will not allow you time enough to dress, at least not so much as some young ladies of your acquaintance have. You remember, my Dear, when you lived in the country, you complained, that Mrs. Bromley obliged you to consume too much time in dressing, and now your aunt gives you too little; and yet, I dare say, she allows you double of what you then had: can any thing be more contradictory and inconsistent? But, my Dear, I blame you not: it is the weakness of human nature: for we are such changeable and inconsistent creatures, that no two persons can differ more widely from each other in their sentiments and manner of thinking, than the same person does from herself in the several stages of her life.

It

It is impossible, my Dear, to determine exactly how much time is sufficient for dressing: sometimes you may require more, sometimes less, just as you may want to dress with greater or less elegance; and some ladies will dress as well in one hour, as others can do in half a dozen. The truth is, a person of good sense, and fine taste will always dress more neatly and quickly, than she who is possessed of neither of these qualities. The former sees at once what is proper, elegant, and graceful. The latter has no notion of neatness, elegance, and propriety. She is therefore perpetually shifting and changing without ever coming to any fixt resolution; and after two or three hours hard labour, she is, at last, thoroughly dissatisfied with herself and her woman, and perhaps farther from her purpose than when she began. As, therefore, you would wish to be esteemed a lady of sense and taste, you must learn to dress with quickness and dispatch.

Besides, what a ridiculous thing is it for any one to spend some four or five hours every day in decking and adorning her body, whilst perhaps she does not employ one tenth part of that time in improving and embellishing her mind. This is behaving as if she were all body, and had no mind to care for: or, as if it had been given her for no other purpose than to contrive ornaments and decorations for her person: a supposition so unworthy of the Author of our being, and the dignity of our own nature, that it can never enter into the head of any sensible person. And yet, if she goes on at this rate, it will soon be so depraved and corrupted as to be good for little else, and hardly even for that. It will be so over-

run with ignorance, prejudice, and error, as to be utterly unfit for any rational exercise or employment. In a word, the mind is our better, it is our principal part, and therefore it demands and deserves our principal care and concern. The body is not to be neglected; by no means: but it is not to take up the greatest part of our time, and far less to engross the whole of it. In my next I shall give you my opinion of diversions and gaming. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

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### LETTER XXVI.

My dear SOPHY,

**A**S I promised in my last, I now sit down to give you my opinion of public diversions and gaming. By your own confession, your aunt allows you to go to the opera, the play, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall: and what more would you have? to what other diversions would you go? to Sadler's-wells and Marybone, &c.? Think with yourself, my Dear, would you really go to these places if you were permitted? I dare say you would not: your own good sense would not allow you.

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The entertainments at Sadler's-wells consist chiefly in exhibiting some odd feats of bodily agility, which may serve extremely well to gratify the gaping curiosity of those who like to gaze and stare at strange sights, but can never afford any rational amusement to people of sense; and the music there, as well as at Marybone, is so much inferior to what you hear at the public places you are allowed to frequent, that you can never have the least inducement to go on that account.

But I had almost forgot that you have another subject of complaint. You and your young cousins, you say, are always attended by an elderly gentlewoman to all the public diversions. And where is the harm of this, pray? Does this same elderly gentlewoman hinder you to enjoy the pleasures of the entertainment? Does she shut your eyes at the play, or stop your ears at the opera? Does she make the company at Ranelagh appear less splendid and brilliant, or the gardens at Vauxhall less pleasing and agreeable? You'll smile, my Dear, at the oddity of these questions, and yet you talk as if she really did so. Where then is the inconvenience of having this prudent lady to walk along with you, and to entertain you with her sensible conversation?

But, you think, it is treating you like a child. And what then? Sure you cannot imagine that you are already a woman. Don't affect to be one too soon.—But to be plain, my Dear, this gentlewoman is intended at once to be your companion, your guide and guardian; to improve you by her sensible discourse and remarks, to teach you a proper and becoming behaviour,



and to protect you from all danger. For, whatever you may think, there is more danger even in these public places than you are aware of, and your aunt has certainly taken the best method to secure you against it.

Suppose now, that you and your cousins were allowed to go to Vauxhall by yourselves. Three or four very young ladies, and nobody to attend them! neither father, nor mother, nor uncle, nor aunt, nor brother, nor any one else! What do you think would be the consequence? Why some pert, forward, impudent young fellow comes up to you, and, by his gentle and artful address, insinuates himself into your company and conversation; and perhaps you are very well pleased with his politeness, and take a turn with him round the garden. Now, my Dear, suppose the danger goes no farther, as I hope it does not; yet do you know who this same young spark is? why, possibly one of the most notorious and abandoned rakes about town; and by having been in his company for half an hour, you may have brought such a slur upon your reputation, as will be very difficult for you to wipe off. You see, my Dear, the hazard you have run; tremble at the imaginary danger: learn to distrust your own strength, and depend entirely on the wiser counsel and direction of your aunt.

Of all these entertainments the representation of a good play is certainly the most rational and instructive. The stage would be an excellent school of morality, were it under proper regulations, which, I am afraid, it is not; for I am told there are such pieces acted there sometimes, as a modest lady would be ashamed to be seen at.

In

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In this particular you must conduct yourself by the advice of your aunt, who, as she will never permit you to go to a bad play, so I am certain will never hinder you to go to a good one, at proper seasons.

There is only one advice, my Dear, I would give you with regard to your behaviour at plays, which is this: let your eyes and attention be fixt rather on the actors than the company: allow your affections to be carried along with the stream of the play; never smile at a mournful scene, nor appear grave and demure at a chearful one. Both these manners are equally ridiculous and unnatural; they betray either an unfeeling heart, or a weak, giddy, and fantastical head; they plainly shew that you don't understand the subject of the play, or that you don't attend to it; or, what is worst of all, that your heart is not susceptible of fine and delicate sentiments.

But, my Dear, with regard to diversions in general, I would have you to remember, that they are to be considered merely as diversions, and not as serious business. They are intended not to dissipate and unsettle the mind, but only to relax and unbend it, that it may return to the performance of the important duties of life with greater alacrity and vigour: and therefore you ought never to allow them to take up too much of your time, and far less to engross the whole of it, as is the practice, I'm afraid, of too many young ladies. What with auctions in the forenoon, visiting in the afternoon, and plays, operas, Ranelagh, Vauxhall, &c. in the evening, I doubt they find but little time for more useful employments. This might do extremely well, had we

been sent into the world only to divert ourselves for a while with bawbles and gew-gaws like children; but that would be a supposition equally unworthy of our great Creator, and the dignity of our own nature: on the contrary we were placed here to contribute to the happiness and welfare of our fellow-creatures, and to improve our own minds in knowledge, virtue, and piety, in order to qualify us for a better and happier state hereafter, as I shall endeavour to show you in some future letter.

Let me therefore advise you, my dear Sophy, never to have recourse to diversions, till once you are wearied and fatigued with business. By this means you will enjoy them with double pleasure; whereas, should you make them your employment, instead of your amusement, they will lose all their relish. For it is with diversions as it is with all other sensual pleasures; the more frequently they are enjoyed, the less agreeable do they become; they pall upon the sense, grow tasteless and insipid, and at last perfectly nauseous and irksome: so that, as well from a regard to your own happiness, as from a sense of duty, you should take care never to throw away too much of your time upon them. And, that you may not be tempted to do so, learn to employ yourself in some more serious and useful business; for I believe in my conscience, that it is not so much from an immoderate love of pleasure, as for want of something else to do, that so many young ladies squander away the whole of their time in a perpetual round of diversions.

At first, perhaps, they may have been led into this way of life by the natural gaiety and spright-  
liness

lines of their own minds, by the bad example of their companions, and by the too great indulgence of their parents and guardians; and after they have continued in it for some time, they contract such a habit of levity and trifling, as utterly disqualifies them for every thing that is serious and rational. Many a time, I dare say, they are heartily tired of their insipid manner of life, of their laborious idleness: but what can they do? they can neither think nor talk of any thing but diversions; and tho' these subjects may do very well now and then, yet they are too barren and superficial to afford a constant fund of conversation to reasonable and intelligent creatures!

What I have said, my Dear, of diversions in general, may be applied to gaming in particular, in which respect your aunt has acted with the greatest prudence and discretion. She allows you to play sometimes, because it is proper you should learn the different kinds of games, that you may be able to make one of a party upon occasion; but she won't allow you to play too frequently, lest, by that means, you should become immoderately fond of it: and, upon no account whatever, will she allow you to play for money, because that might produce a habit of avarice, the most base and sordid passion that can enter into the breast of a young lady.

Of all kinds of diversions that of gaming is the most enticing and bewitching, and therefore the most pernicious and destructive. As it depends partly on chance, and partly on art, a run of success flatters our vanity in the highest degree: it is at once paying a compliment to our  
good



good fortune, and to our good understanding; and I have seen a young thoughtless creature assume more merit to herself, and seem better satisfied with her own conduct for winning a few games, than one of more sense and less vanity would have been for settling and ballancing her mother's accounts, or performing any other of the most important duties of life.

But if this run of good luck, besides flattering her vanity, is at the same time filling her pockets with money, then the love of gaming grows upon her apace: it seizes and engrosses her whole soul; it shuts her eyes, as it were, and stops her ears against every other object; it employs her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night: and she is never happy but when she is either preparing for, or is actually engaged in it. When a person is arrived at such a degree of phrenzy as this (for I can call it no better) she is labouring under one of the most violent and dangerous diseases of the mind, from which it is ten to one, if either the utmost exertion of her own reason, or the best advice of her friends will be able to recover her. And yet if she is not recovered very soon, she will be utterly ruined and undone; for if once the love of money grafted upon that of gaming has taken deep root in the soul, and is become the ruling passion, it bears down all before it; health, beauty, fame, fortune, happiness, every thing is sacrificed to it. This, my Dear, you will think is a hideous picture; and indeed so it is. Would to God there were no originals! I hope there are few, but still I believe, nay I am certain there are

are some, tho' I trust in God you will never make one of that unhappy number.

But suppose gaming were attended with none of these dreadful effects, yet methinks, the trifling and insipid nature of the thing itself might be a sufficient argument to dissuade any sensible person from spending her time in it. To pass whole afternoons without any other ideas in the mind, than such as arise from the colour of a card, the number of a die, or the like; good God! Is this to behave like rational creatures?

I know your professed gamesters tell another tale, and that to play well requires greater abilities, a quicker apprehension, more penetration and depth of thought than almost any employment whatever; and that, what with forming schemes, and calculating chances, their minds are more actively employed than that of the merchant, who is writing letters of business to all the different parts of the world. Perhaps they may; tho', methinks, I could stop the mouths of all such vain boasters by this single question: *Whether are they as usefully employed for the public good?*

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to condemn all manner of gaming: far from it. On the contrary, I think every young lady should understand the different games that are most in vogue, that so she may not be put to the blush, if at any time she is desired to join in a party. It is a very agreeable amusement to pass away an idle hour now and then: but still I would have you to remember what I told you before, that it is only to be considered as a diversion, and not as a real employment.—Please to present my compliments

pliments to your aunt and all her family. Your papa, your brothers and sisters join me in wishing you all manner of happiness. I am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

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## LETTER XXVII.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**Y**OUR two letters on dress and diversions came safe to hand. I am greatly obliged to you for your good advice and directions, and will endeavour to conduct myself accordingly. But since you will not allow me to spend so much of my time on these trifles, as I see others of my age and quality do, you must be so good as to find me in some more useful employment; for of all things I hate to be idle; and yet I am afraid I shall frequently be obliged to be so, till I receive your further instructions. For, as most parts of my education are nearly, if not entirely finished, I don't know how to dispose of my time.

Sometimes,

Sometimes, indeed, I take a book in my hand ; but as I have been told there are more bad than good ones, and don't know what particular authors are most proper for my perusal, I am afraid to dip too deep into them, lest I should do myself more ill than good. Sometimes I work a little at my needle, but lay it aside presently when I begin to reflect that I am under no necessity of submitting to that drudgery, as I can have others to do it for me. Sometimes I join in conversation with my aunt, and such company as are visiting her, and these indeed are the happiest hours I pass. This however is a pleasure I seldom enjoy, and perhaps, if I enjoyed it oftner, it might lose its relish.

But, notwithstanding all these various amusements, I still find I have several vacant hours, which begin to lie heavy on my hand ; and, if I cannot fall upon some method of employing them one way or other, I am afraid they will at last become intolerably irksome and disagreeable. Let me therefore again intreat you, my dear Mamma, to send me, by the first opportunity, your best advice on the employment and improvement of my time. Please to offer my duty to my papa, and my love to my brothers and sisters. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.



## LETTER XXVIII.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**I** AM glad to see by your last, that you are fully convinced of the truth of what I said concerning dress and diversions, and are so sensible of the inestimable worth and value of your time, which indeed is the most precious treasure you can possess, as it is the foundation and groundwork of every other blessing you enjoy.

But precious as our time is, yet there is not any one thing of which we are so careless, or rather prodigal and profuse. We either squander it away upon mere trifles, or allow it to pass in a state of listless indolence, or lazy inactivity. The present moment we seldom enjoy, or improve to any good purpose. We are perpetually busied in forming schemes for some future and distant period; and when that period is come, we neglect it, as we have done those that are already past; and then lay new schemes for some other period more distant still: and so on without end; till, at last arrived on the verge of old age, we begin to take a review of our past conduct, and find, that we have consumed the greatest part of our time in forming schemes and resolutions, but have hardly ever had the wisdom and courage to put so much as one of them in execution.

Such, my Dear, is the picture of a lazy, indolent, and idle person: for, I believe, even the  
laziest

laziest of that lazy tribe have still some thoughts of doing better to-morrow; but to-morrow comes and passes like to-day, and another morrow after that; and thus they doze away their whole lives in a kind of waking dream or reverie. Such a conduct as this would be extremely foolish and absurd, even upon the supposition that they were certain of arriving at old age, tho' indeed it were to be wished, for the honour of their character, that they never reached that period, since the longer they live, they only become the more ridiculous: but when it is considered that no one can promise herself another year, and hardly even another day or hour, then folly is too gentle a name for such a behaviour; 'tis madness, 'tis phrenzy in the highest degree: and yet with this phrenzy and madness every person may be said to be seized, who consumes her whole life in idleness and indolence.

But, my Dear, don't mistake me. I don't mean to insinuate, by any thing I have now said, that the mind should be always kept on the stretch; the contrary of this I have allowed in some of my former letters: but this, I think, I may safely affirm, that it ought always to be engaged one way or other, either in some useful and profitable employment, or in some innocent and chearful diversion, that it may return to the duties of life with greater vigor and alacrity; but never, by any means, should it be suffered to rust in sloth and inactivity.

Idleness, my Dear is a most pernicious and fatal vice, whether we consider its influence on the mind or the body. It weakens the strength and impairs the beauty of the latter; for an indolent person

person will hardly be at the pains to take so much exercise as is necessary to keep the body in health and vigor. It stupefies and benumbs the understanding; for she will not take the trouble to improve it, either by reading or conversation. Nay it will even corrupt and debase the heart; for it is inconsistent with a state of ease and indolence to have the strong but fine, affections of love, pity, compassion, sorrow, sympathy and the like, frequently awakened and excited in the breast: and yet, if these tender passions are not frequently excited either by real or imaginary objects, the heart will gradually become hard and unfeeling, and at last perfectly callous and insensible.

This disease of idleness has different effects upon different tempers. What tempts Mrs. Stanley to spend the greatest part of her time in scandal and defamation? why, 'tis idleness working upon a disposition naturally sour and splenetic. What makes miss Temple trifle away her whole life in an insipid round of public and private diversions? because she has got nothing else to do; 'tis idleness working upon the natural levity and giddiness of her mind. In a word, idleness is the parent, or at least the nurse, of most of the follies and vices incident to human nature, and from which we might easily be preserved, would we only take care to keep ourselves always engaged either in some useful employment or innocent amusement. I shall, therefore, endeavour to point out such employments and amusements as appear to be most proper for one of your age and quality; tho' indeed you have in a great measure prevented me,  
your

your own good sense having directed you to some of the best and most rational.

But first, my Dear, I must observe that you are greatly mistaken, in thinking that your education is entirely finished. It is true you are no more under the direction of teachers : but what then ? are you therefore to lay aside all further care and concern about the several parts of your education ? if you do, you may depend upon it, you will very soon forget them ; and then all the instruction you have got, will go for nothing. As therefore you would wish to retain the different arts and accomplishments you have learned, you must take care to be frequently practising them ; for by this means only can they be remembered.

But, my Dear, you ought not only to remember what you have learned ; you ought to do more ; you ought to be making daily progress and improvement in all the different parts of your education : for if you are not gaining ground, you may be sure you are losing it ; there is no such thing as standing still. Learning is like climbing up a steep ascent ; if you are not moving upwards, you will be in danger of sliding down to the bottom. Besides, teachers seldom do any more, and indeed they hardly can do any more, than to point out the road and shew us the way : it is our business to profit and improve by their advice and directions ; if we do not, all the teaching and instruction in the world will never make us good for any thing. A person possessed of no taste or genius, will never learn any polite art or accomplishment, had she an angel for her instructor ; and she, that is careless and  
negligent,



negligent, will as certainly forget what she has learned.

Let me, therefore, persuade you, my dear Sophy, to employ two or three hours every day in revising all the different parts of your education. By this means you will at once impress them on your memory, and acquire such an ease and facility in performing, as can only be obtained by careful and constant practice. But tho' I would have you carefully to review all the arts and accomplishments you have learned, yet I think you ought, at the same time, to make a distinction. There are some of them, such as music, dancing, drawing, and the like, which are merely, or at least chiefly, ornamental. There are others, which, besides being ornamental, are likewise useful, such as writing, arithmetic, geography, and needle-work. Now, tho' I would by no means have you to neglect the former, but on the contrary to be daily improving in them; yet I think you ought to apply your chief attention to the latter. For, whatever you may think at present, you will be convinced, when you come to understand the true value of things, that what is useful, is of infinitely greater consequence and importance than what is only ornamental: and for one married lady, that complains of her not having learned to dance, sing, or draw better, there are hundreds who lament that they did not take more pains to improve themselves in writing, cyphering, and other useful arts.

You sometimes work a little at your needle, you say, but throw it aside when you begin to reflect that you can employ others to work for you :

you : a very pretty reason truly ! Why, my Dear, you might excuse yourself from every thing else by the very same argument. You can pay others to write, cast accompts, sing, dance, draw, in a word, to do any thing for you. But, when these people, write, sing, dance, &c. for your money, whether is it you or they that perform ? Or does their performing for your money make you a whit the more learned or accomplished ? Think with yourself, my Dear : where will your excuse end ? Why, it will end in this conclusion, that, because you are rich and have an easy fortune, you may therefore remain ignorant and idle ; a fine way of reasoning indeed ! But to be serious, you ought to attend to your needle-work, and to acquire a perfect knowledge of that useful art, not only as it is a genteel accomplishment, but likewise from the motives of œconomy and convenience : for no woman, let her rank and fortune be what they will, should think it below her to make some of the nicer parts of her own dress. I have several head-dresses of my own making ; and I am sure I always wear them with greater pleasure, than I do those that have been made by others. This, methinks, is an excusable vanity.

You know lady Emilia Montague. Her fortune is larger, and her quality much higher, than yours ; and yet, when her papa was confined, last winter, with a long and severe fit of the gout, she attended upon him so closely, that she hardly ever left his room ; and what kinds of needle-work were wanted for his use, she made with her own hands, and would not allow any person to deprive her of what, she said, was both her honour

honour and pleasure. This has so endeared her to her papa, that, tho' he was very fond of her before, he is now doubly so; and I am credibly informed that he has lately made a considerable addition to her fortune, and probably for this very reason.

But there is no way, my Dear, in which you may pass your time with greater pleasure than in reading good and sensible books. This is, at once, a most rational employment, and a most agreeable amusement. It is one of the greatest inlets of knowledge and wisdom, and one of the most effectual methods of banishing ignorance, prejudice, and error. It is an inexhaustible source of useful instruction and delightful entertainment. And it has this advantage above all other amusements, that here you may chuse your company as you please. If you are disposed to be grave and serious, or chearful and merry; if you want to inform your understanding, delight your imagination, or affect your heart; you will find authors that will answer all or any of these purposes; and with this additional recommendation into the bargain, that whenever you are weary of their company, you can leave it without the imputation of ill-manners. 'Tis but closing the book, and then your well-bred companions immediately disappear.

But of all the different kinds of reading, there is none that can afford more profitable instruction, or more delightful entertainment than that of history. It introduces us to the company of all the great and illustrious personages that have gone before us; makes us talk and converse with them, almost as familiarly as if we had been their  
 their

their contemporaries; and acquaints us with their manners, characters, virtues, and vices. It carries us back into the earliest ages of antiquity, and thus makes us to live over, as it were, all that period of time which has passed since the creation. It transports us into the most distant regions of the earth, and, by the help of geography, makes us travel, in imagination, over the whole habitable world, without once stirring out of our room.

And now, my Dear, that I have mentioned geography, you will remember I told you in a former letter, that it would be of great service to you in the study of history; and indeed so it will, if you make a proper use of it. For this purpose, you must take care never to read any particular transaction, without placing before you a map of the country where the scene is laid: this will both give you a more full and comprehensive view of the subject, and impress it more deeply on your memory. Thus geography and history will mutually aid and assist each other: geography will make you understand historical facts more distinctly, and remember them more faithfully; and history will furnish you with a more accurate description of the climate, soil, and produce of the various parts of the earth; and with a more particular account of the manners, customs, and characters of the several inhabitants.

From this inexhaustible source of profit and pleasure, you may derive the wisest maxims and rules of life. Here you will behold the obedient child, the dutiful daughter, the chaste virgin, the prudent mother, and the resigned and pious widow;



widow; and, by observing how others have acted when surrounded with dangers, or involved in difficulties, you will learn how to behave yourself when placed in the same, or the like circumstances. Here you may behold every virtue that can dignify human nature in general, or the female sex in particular, reduced into practice. In a word, here you may acquire the knowledge of the world, without the danger of being infected by its bad example; which, indeed, is a circumstance peculiar to history alone.

History and conversation are the only two ways, in which you can obtain this knowledge. The latter is perhaps the most infallible method, but at the same time, it is the most dangerous, the former, though less exact and particular, is certainly much more safe and secure. When we behold a vicious character in conversation, it is frequently varnished over with so many agreeable qualities, such as wit, humour, gaiety, and cheerfulness, that we are often inclined to love the person, though we hate the vice; and when once we love the person, we are in danger of loving the character in general, and consequently of being infected and corrupted by the baneful influence of bad example. But in history the case is very different; there vice is stripped of all its foreign and fictitious ornaments; there it appears naked and unmasked in all its native ugliness and deformity, and needs only to be shewn, in order to be shunned; it needs only to be exposed in its true and genuine colours, in order to become the object of universal hatred and detestation.

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It is true, what you gain in one point, you lose in another. What you gain with respect to vicious characters, you lose with regard to those that are virtuous; for, as vice appears most odious in history, so virtue appears most amiable in real life: here it is so lighted up and animated, so recommended and enforced by the modest and benign look, the engaging manner, the courteous behaviour, and winning address, that what in description would only be agreeable and beautiful, is thus rendered irresistibly charming and attractive. But as there are more bad than good characters in the world, and as the art of life consists as much in knowing what to avoid as what to pursue, this consideration, perhaps, may be sufficient to counter-balance the loss. But the truth is, history and conversation are entirely distinct: each hath its several advantages, nor does the one encroach upon the province of the other. History represents the time past, conversation describes the time present: history shews us the world as it has been, conversation shews us the world as it now actually is: history informs us how our ancestors have behaved, conversation tells us how our contemporaries are now behaving. Thus history and conversation go hand in hand, and kindly join their mutual aid in furnishing the mind with knowledge and instruction.

Of all the different kinds of history, that of your own country should be the first object of your study and attention; for to be deeply read in the history of other countries, and yet ignorant of the history of your own, would be a absurd and preposterous, as to be intimately acquainted with what passes in your neighbour's house,

house, without knowing what happens in your own family. What history of England-I should recommend to your perusal, I am somewhat at a loss to determine. After all the histories of this kingdom, that have yet been offered to the public, Rapin's is, I think, at once, the most full and the most impartial. But, as that may be deemed rather too tedious for one of your age and capacity, I would have you, in the mean time, to read a very judicious and accurate Abridgment of English History, written in the form of letters from a nobleman to his son, and printed in two volumes 12mo.; and, after you are farther advanced in years, you may then read Rapin's, or any other history of England, which your father or your uncle may judge most proper.

And here, I am afraid, most people will imagine, that your knowledge in history may stop. They think it is sufficient for a lady to understand the history of her own country; and that any further knowledge, of this kind, is superfluous, and out of character. But, I must own, I am of a very different opinion; for I think that every accomplished woman should have a tolerable knowledge of history in general. I don't pretend to say, that we should be so thoroughly versed, or so deeply read, in universal history, as the men are; far from it: I have already allowed, that as our sphere of action is more narrow and confined, so our knowledge may be more slight and superficial. But what then? Because we are not to be so knowing as the men, must we therefore be allowed to know little or nothing at all? Because we are not to aspire to the

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the character of universal scholars, must we therefore be obliged to remain in the most profound ignorance? a pretty way of reasoning truly! And in this respect, methinks, the men act very unreasonably: they frequently allege that young ladies cannot join in sensible and serious conversation, and yet they will not allow them to acquire that kind of knowledge, which alone can qualify them for it: they first keep them ignorant, and then complain of their ignorance; generous treatment indeed! But to be serious, my Dear, I believe we ourselves are most to blame: our ignorance is rather to be imputed to our own lazy, fickle, and trifling disposition, than to any ill advice or undue influence of the men.

The only plausible objection I ever heard against a lady's being learned, is, that it naturally tends to make her vain, conceited, and impertinent, and to neglect those qualifications and accomplishments which are the distinguishing ornaments of her sex. But this is a mere pretext, a gross fallacy and delusion: for she is who is impertinent with learning, would have been equally impertinent without it; she who is now a prattling pedant, would have been otherwise a fluttering coquette. The truth is, good sense is the gift of nature, and not the acquisition of art: we are born either with the seeds of wisdom or of folly: education may increase these qualities where it finds them, but can never produce them where they are not; and all the knowledge and learning in the world, will never convert a natural fool into a sensible woman, nor a sensible woman into a fool. It is not learning that makes a woman vain and impertinent; no: it only draws her



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her natural vanity and impertinence into a certain channel, and makes her express them in a particular manner; for vain and impertinent she would have been, whether she had been learned or not.

I must, therefore, insist upon it as the privilege of our sex, that we be allowed to know more than the history of our own country. For even granting that this kind of knowledge may have a bad effect on weak and silly minds, is that a sufficient reason for excluding our whole sex from the study of history? By the same way of reasoning, the men too might be excluded; for, I think, it is a notorious truth, that there are more men than women spoiled by learning; and for every female pedant, it would, perhaps, be no difficult matter to produce twenty male ones.

Next to the history of your own country, I would have you to study that of Scotland; a sufficient knowledge of which may, indeed, be easily acquired by any one that understands the history of England. For as the Scots never had, and, not being a maritime power, never could have, any very important concerns with any nation but the English, so all the most considerable transactions relating to that people may be found in the English history. You may read, however, Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland, which is a work of great merit, and is well worth your perusal. You may likewise consult Buchanan's History with regard to the more early periods of the history of that kingdom.

Though there are several distinct histories of all the different nations of Europe, yet, I am  
afraid,

afraid, it would be deemed presumptuous in one of my sex, to say which of them are the best; and, besides, I think it is better to give your studies a certain, fixed, and determined aim, that you may not be perpetually rambling from book to book, without ever finishing any one. I would therefore advise you to read the Universal History, or at least, an abridgment of the Universal History, ancient and modern. This, to be sure, will be a work of much time and some labour, though, I hope, the pleasure will be more than sufficient to compensate for the labour; and as to the time, you know you have plenty to spare: you are still but young, and it is of no consequence though you should not finish it for some five or six years; which I imagine however, you may easily do, by only reading an hour or two every day, and this, I dare say, you will think no difficult task.

There is another large field of reading, my Dear, in which you may employ your time with great pleasure and delight; I mean in novels, romances, plays, and every other kind of poetry. To these may be added, the Spectators, Guardians, and Tatlers, which will serve to give you a notion of the foibles and fashions of the last age; as also the Rambler, Idler, Adventurer, and Connoisseur, which will let you into the prevailing humours of the present.

With regard to plays, I don't know any complete volumes that are faultless, though I could name many single plays that are so; but in the choice of these, as well as of romances, I think you had better conduct yourself by the advice of your aunt, and never venture to read any but  
such

such as she approves. What plays she allows you to see acted, you may doubtless read with safety; and perhaps it would not be amiss to read every play before you go to see it represented. This, to be sure, will lessen the pleasure of novelty and surprize; but to compensate for that trifling loss, it will give you a more full and distinct view of the subject, and make you a more competent judge of the merit and abilities of the several actors.

And as the previous reading of a play, will enable you to behold the representation of it with more judgment and discernment, so the representation will teach you to read with greater justness and propriety. Here you may observe what gesture, what look, what tone and accent is most proper to express every particular passion of the soul; and without understanding these distinctly, and being able to assume and practise them upon occasion, no person can read with a good grace.

I don't mean, however, that you should read with a theatrical air, because that might favour too much of affectation; but you certainly ought to read with a proper and natural one, otherwise you never can read well. What a ridiculous thing would it be to pronounce an angry, passionate speech, with a low, gentle, and soft accent, or to repeat a mournful and melancholy complaint, in a loud, blustering, and thundering tone? This were to invert the nature of things, and to destroy all order and propriety. The truth is, all the several passions of the soul have certain tones of voice, which are peculiarly adapted to express them; and therefore whatever passion a speech or sentence contains, it should always be  
read

read with its proper and natural accent. This is one of the greatest niceties and beauties in reading, but in which, I am sorry to say it, most ladies are extremely deficient. They read a history, a romance, a play, a letter, an advertisement, every thing with the same uniform, unmeaning tone; so that unless you attend to the sense, you shall not be able to judge by their manner what they are reading.

I must confess I was somewhat diverted, or rather indeed vexed and chagrined, at an incident of this nature, which happened lately. I went one day to visit lady Dalston. As, you know, she is a woman of sense and prudence, instead of calling for the cards after tea, she desired her eldest daughter to read to us the play of Zara, in which there are many affecting scenes, and pathetic speeches. About the time she had finished the first act, Mr. Townshend happened to call upon her papa, who stepped into the next room, where they had a private conference for a quarter of an hour: but as the door stood open, Mr. Townshend could very easily hear miss reading all the while. Upon his coming into the room where we were, after the usual compliments were over, he asked the young lady if that was not a volume of Rapin she had got in her hand. As bad a reader as she was, she seemed to be sensible of the satire; and therefore answered with a deep blush, that it was not Rapin, but a volume of plays. Upon this, the gentleman stood confounded for a little, not knowing what decent apology to make; but at last, recollecting himself, he begged her pardon, and told her that he should not have asked such an impertinent ques-



tion, if he had either heard or seen her reading; though most of the company knew very well, that he had done both. But in truth, from her insipid and lifeless manner of reading, he might as well have taken it for a book of cookery, as for a volume of history or plays.

But if this instance of bad reading gave me pain and uneasiness, I must own another instance of fine reading, (which I lately had an opportunity of hearing) gave me as much pleasure and delight. Some months ago, I went to visit the countess of Egremont, who, you know, has a numerous family of daughters, and besides she had, at that time, some five or six visitants from London. One evening as we were taking a walk along the banks of the river, which runs hard by the garden-wall, we espied, at a distance, a young lady, sitting in a kind of natural arbour, with a book in her hand, which she seemed to be reading, with great vehemence and emotion. We presently began to form conjectures what might be the subject of the book. At first we were of different opinions, some thinking it to be one thing and some another; but upon observing her air and manner more attentively, and even before we came within reach of the sound, we all agreed that it must be some play. As we approached nearer, and heard the tone of her voice, though without understanding the sense, we were still more confirmed in our former opinion. Miss was so deeply engaged, that we were almost close to her before she perceived us; which, however, when she did, she seemed to be a little surprised, put up her book, and rising, with a decent and modest blush, courtesy'd to the company. The  
countess,

countess, who was very well acquainted with the young lady (who happened to be the parson's daughter) begged her to tell us ingenuously what book it was she had been reading; upon which she pulled it out of her pocket, and shewed us that it was a volume of Shakespear's plays.

The truth is, you may judge from the air, manner, and gesture of a good reader, or at most, from the inarticulate sound of her voice, though you should not be near enough to comprehend the sense, what is the general subject of the book. But with a bad reader, you must hear and understand the full sense and meaning of every word and expression, before you can know what she is about; otherwise you shall not be able to distinguish whether she is reading a play or an advertisement, the description of a battle or of a funeral procession. Besides, there is another material difference between a good and bad reader, which is this, that the former conveys the author's meaning fully and distinctly to her hearers, and makes a deep and lasting impression upon their minds; whereas the latter makes little or no impression at all; or if she does, it is rather owing to the merit of the book, than to her insipid manner of reading it.

But there is still another advantage, which may be derived from reading good and sensible books: they will not only inform your understanding, delight your imagination, correct your taste, and improve your heart, but they will likewise give you a natural, easy, and elegant manner of expressing yourself, whether in speaking or writing. This, my Dear, though seemingly a trifling accomplishment, is, in reality, a

most necessary part of polite education ; and it is as great a shame for a young lady not to be able to tell a story with ease and fluency, or to write an elegant and genteel letter, as not to know how to dance a minuet,

Indeed, this elegance of taste and propriety of language will be best learned, by reading a collection of familiar epistles. But of this kind, I am sorry to say it, we have none in English, that are proper for the perusal of a young lady. The letters of Pope and Fitz-Osbourne, and Pliny's epistles translated by Melmoth, are, no doubt, excellent in their kind ; but then, they are rather too learned and laboured for one of your sex and age. You may read them, however, with great safety, profit and pleasure : they will, at least, improve your taste and language in general : though, perhaps, they will not teach you that easy, free, and familiar style, which is peculiarly adapted for female epistolary writing.

But what you cannot have in English, you may easily find in French, a language which you happily understand. Indeed this is a species of writing, in which the French seem to excel us. Whether it be, that that lively and sprightly humour, which makes them more talkative in conversation than we are, leads them, at the same time, to write with greater ease, elegance, and propriety ; or that the modesty of the English ladies will not allow them to publish their private letters, though perhaps equal, if not superior to theirs, I will not take upon me to determine ; but certain it is, that they have much larger and much better collections of familiar epistles, written by ladies, than any that have ever been produced

duced in this country. Madame de Sévigné's letters are finished models of this kind; and these I would advise you to read with great care and attention. There you will behold all the different sentiments, passions, and affections of the human mind, expressed in the most proper and natural language.

And, after you have acquired some taste in this way, I would have you to try your skill and abilities, by beginning an epistolary correspondence with some of your absent friends. It is true, you have wrote me several letters already, with which I am very well pleased: and though it cannot be expected they should be perfect in their kind, yet they plainly show that you have the rudiments of good sense and fine taste within you. But, my Dear, you will write with greater ease and freedom to young ladies of your own age; and, I am sure, there are several here, who would be glad of your correspondence, as you have it in your power to oblige them much more, by sending them the news of London, than they can possibly oblige you, by any thing they can write you from the country. Let me, therefore, advise you to establish a correspondence as soon as possible, with a few of your absent friends, and you will soon find the good effects of it: you will find yourself grow more expert every day, in the art of letter-writing; for in this, as well as in every thing else, practice is the only means to arrive at perfection.

There is only one general advice I would give you in this case; when you are going to write a letter, sit down and compose your mind; disengage yourself from every other care and concern; recall



recall to your memory the idea of your absent friend; represent her to your imagination, as if she were actually present, and were talking and conversing with you; and after you have heated your fancy, and warmed your heart, by this imaginary conversation, then give full scope to the natural over-flowings of your soul; take the pen, and write down whatever comes uppermost in your mind, without ceremony or restraint. By this means you will write with greater ease, elegance, and propriety, than if you should sit for hours together, musing, and studying, and racking your brain, for turns of wit, and flights of fancy. However, before you can succeed in this way, you must have acquired such a copious and fluent style, as to be able to clothe all your sentiments in proper and expressive language.

But, as I would not wish to tire you with the immoderate length of my letter, I must break off, and reserve what I have further to say on this head, for the subject of my next. Mean while I conclude, by recommending you to the protection of Almighty God. I ever am,

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XXIX.

My dear SOPHY,

**I** Now sit down to resume the subject, which I treated pretty largely, but could not finish in my last. Another way, then, in which you may employ your time with equal profit and pleasure, is, in conversing with a set of sensible and ingenious friends. Conversation, my Dear, will whet your genius, awaken and fix your attention, warm and improve your heart, polish and refine your manners, and give you a certain ease and elegance of address, which is not to be obtained in any other way.

And it has this peculiar advantage above reading, that, whatever doubts and difficulties occur, you can easily have them solved and cleared up, by only asking a few questions; whereas, in reading, if you meet with a dark and obscure passage, the author is not at hand to tell you his meaning, but, in order to find out the sense, you must depend entirely on your own acuteness and penetration. Nay, what is more, you may even have those very difficulties, which occur in reading, explained in conversation, as it is ten to one but there are some in the company, who have read the same book, and perhaps understand it better than you; or, though none of them should understand it perfectly, yet by hearing their different sentiments and opinions, you may, at least, approach nearer to the sense.

And

And I think it would be a good maxim to make what you have been lately reading the subject of conversation, as often as you decently can, without the imputation of pedantry ; which, however, you will be in no danger of incurring in the company of your friends, as I take it for granted, that their taste and way of thinking is pretty much the same with your own. By this means you will not only have your doubts removed, but, by considering and examining the same thing in a variety of lights, you will even understand more distinctly what you thought you understood sufficiently before.

In company we frequently say a thousand smart and ingenious things, which would never have come into our head while alone. Conversation is a kind of touch-stone, that tries and examines the real strength and abilities of the mind, and draws forth the latent sparks of genius, which lie concealed within it, and which otherwise might have lain concealed for ever, as flints, which though they contain the seeds of fire, yet unless they are mutually struck against one another will never produce any flame.

Conversation is one of the best schools in the world for learning the virtues of modesty and humility, as you will there be accustomed to hear your own sentiments and opinions freely examined and canvassed, and sometimes contradicted and refuted ; whereas one who is always moping and musing by herself, is apt to contract a sullen, sulky, and supercilious air : and, if at any time she engages in conversation, she is so proud and conceited that she cannot bear contradiction.

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The rules of polite conversation, you know, I have explained above, so that here I need be the less particular. I shall only add, that if you happen to be interrupted in telling a story, you ought to consider with yourself who it is that interrupts you.

If it be a person of sense and discretion, you should not resume the subject by any means, unless you are importuned to it by the lady herself and the rest of the company; and in that case I would not have you to refuse; to do so might have too much the appearance of pique and resentment, as if you were affronted and had taken offence, which you should never do, or at least never seem to do: for this, in my opinion, is always a mark of a weak, silly, and childish mind, and is utterly inconsistent with all the rules of politeness and good-breeding. Perhaps it was a mistake in the lady, and even the most sensible are not free from mistakes. But if it was done designedly, and you are not desired to go on with your story; then you may depend upon it, you deserved to be interrupted; then you should not only drop your story entirely, but you ought likewise to profit and improve by this friendly correction, and learn to behave better for the future.

If you are interrupted by a person of little or no sense, even in this case you should not be too forward in resuming your story, unless you are desired to do so by some one of the company, and the rest seem to expect it by their looks and silence: otherwise, if they go on to talk of something else, you may be certain they are heartily tired of your insipid trifling; though perhaps they



condemn the ill-manners of the person who interrupted you, yet they are glad that your mouth is stopt at any rate.

This practice, my Dear, of telling stories is one of the most nice and delicate points in conversation, and in which many people are apt to commit the grossest blunders. I don't say that a person should never take the liberty of telling a story in company, but this I say, that when she does so, which by the bye ought to be extremely seldom, her story should always be very short and very distinct; otherwise, instead of being a pleasant and agreeable companion, as perhaps she fondly imagines she is, she will become a trifling and impertinent babbler. But your professed story-tellers are not content with taking this liberty now and then; they must be perpetually engaged in the same old beaten track, or they would be perfectly silent, for they have got nothing else to say. You shall hear one of this character begin a long, dull, perplexed story; and after having babbled on for a quarter of an hour, some one of the company, who has sense enough to perceive her impertinence, and courage enough to give it a check, introduces some other subject. Well! madam wraps herself up in her own thoughts, and remains in a kind of silent suspense, regardless of what they are saying, (for your story-tellers never attend to the discourse of other people) and waits only for a fresh opportunity of resuming the thread of her important history. As soon as she observes a pause in the conversation, she immediately seizes the much wish'd-for moment, and with a self sufficient air, cries out, "as I was saying," though no body thinks

thinks it worth their while to remember one word she was saying; and thus she labours and trudges on, till at last the company lose all patience, and either break up entirely to avoid the grating noise of her babbling tongue, or give her such a severe reprimand, as can only be justified by the necessity of the case, and is not perhaps so very consistent with the manners of polite company, into which however these impertinent fools should never pretend to intrude.

But of all kind of story-tellers, those that deal in pedigrees, genealogies and family-connexions, are the most intolerable. One of this class, if she happen to mention the name of any lady or gentleman, will trace you back their families to the time of William the Conqueror, and tell you every silly thing that has been either said or done by every one of their ancestors.

For the misfortune is, that your mere story-teller is always a person of weak understanding; she has not judgment to distinguish between a matter of importance and a trifle, and of consequence she generally remembers those actions only which were better forgotten, and forgets those which deserve to be remembered. In a word, a story-teller is the pest, the plague, the bane, the nuisance of polite company; she has no taste nor genius, no fancy nor invention; her soul may be said to be all over memory; she cannot produce a good thought, nor say a smart and sensible thing of her own; and therefore she is content to relate the trifling and insignificant sayings of others, which she repeats by rote, like a prattling parrot or chattering magpye.

As therefore you would wish to obtain the character of an agreeable companion, and to avoid that of an impertinent trifler, you must take particular care never to fall into this common error; for that it is too common, you will soon be convinced by your own experience and observation.

Thus, my Dear, in reviewing all the different parts of your education in general, and particularly in working, reading, and conversation, you will find abundance of employment. There are many other methods of spending your time, which I have purposely omitted here, because they will come to be considered more properly afterwards. The study and practice of all the moral virtues will furnish a large and extensive field of exercise, in which you may, and ought to employ a considerable part of your time, as I shall endeavour to convince you in some other letter. At present, I have no more to add, but that I ever am

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

LET-

## LETTER XXX.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

I Received both your letters on the employment of time, and cannot express how much I am obliged to you for your good and sensible advice, which you may be assured, I will carefully follow.

I remember, when I was at the boarding-school, I fondly imagined, that, by the time I was sixteen or seventeen years of age, my education would be entirely finished, and I should have nothing to mind but pleasure and diversion. But what a vain and foolish conceit has it been! I find, on the contrary, that the longer I live, I have the more to learn. I cannot say that I am disappointed in this, as it gives me no pain nor uneasiness; I am rather pleased and delighted with it, as it shews that, when we arrive at the years of discretion, we are capable of so many rational exercises and employments, which we had not the least notion of, whilst we were young and inexperienced.

Indeed, it should seem from the conversation of my aunt, that my education is very far from being completely finished; for, she says, that, besides reviewing the several qualifications and accomplishments I have already acquired, there are many new virtues which I have still to learn. She is perpetually reading lectures to my cousin and  
me



me on temperance, chastity, modesty, humility, charity, benevolence, and I don't know how many other virtues, which, she says, are the glory and ornament of the female sex. It is true, she is pleased to compliment us by saying, that we seldom transgress against any of these virtues, but alleges at the same time, that we do not sufficiently understand their real nature and importance, nor how absolutely necessary it is to possess and practise them, in order to make us happy in ourselves, and agreeable to the world.

Be so good, my dear Mamma, as to write me your opinion of all these matters in your next. For though my aunt and you will, in all probability, be pretty much of the same way of thinking, yet I shall at least receive this one advantage from your letters, that I shall always have them by me, to consult upon occasion; and what I cannot understand or remember at one time, I may possibly may do at another. Please to make my duty acceptable to my papa, and my love to my sisters and brothers. I am

Your obliged and obedient daughter,

SOPHIA.

LET-

## LETTER XXXI.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**I** Received and read your letter with great pleasure and satisfaction. As you advance in years, your sense of duty and obedience, instead of being diminished, as is too frequently the case with young people, seems rather to be heightened and increased.

I am glad to see, that you are sensible of the folly and vanity of your childish fancies and imaginations, when you was at the boarding-school. The sense of our own folly and ignorance is the best symptom of our wisdom and knowledge, and the surest pledge of our further progress and improvement; but a fond conceit and high opinion of our own wisdom and knowledge, is the most effectual bar in the way of our ever acquiring either of these excellent qualities. For how should she, who vainly thinks she is wise and learned enough already, ever endeavour to become more so? How should she, who fondly imagines she wants nothing, put herself to the trouble and labour of procuring what she does not want? The truth is, a young lady, who fancies that she is very wise and very learned, is likely to continue a fool and a dunce all her life.

What was your expectation, however, when you was at the boarding-school, is, I dare say, the expectation of ninety-nine in a hundred at  
that

that time of life; and 'tis well if they don't conduct themselves accordingly, when they arrive at what are usually called, and what indeed ought to be, the years of discretion. 'Tis well if they don't imagine, that they have already learned all that can or need be learned; that they are now women, and accomplished too, and therefore may devote their whole time and attention to dress, visiting, and diversions. But this, I would fain think, is the fate of very few, and, I am confident, it will never be yours: you have already given sufficient proofs of your superior sense and prudence: you have already made some progress in those higher kinds of learning, which are proper for a lady; and I hope you will continue to go on with the same spirit and alacrity, with which you have begun.

Your aunt's lectures, my Dear, (as you are pleased to call them) on temperance, chastity, modesty, humility, charity, benevolence and the like, are extremely proper and necessary. These are virtues, which it is the duty of every young lady distinctly to understand, and carefully to practise: they are, as your aunt justly observes, the glory and ornament of the female sex: they add an inexpressible grace and lustre to all our other qualifications and accomplishments; and without them, wit, beauty, knowledge, and learning, are not only useless and insignificant; but, what is still worse, pernicious and destructive.

A beautiful person, with a vicious mind, is no better than a painted sepulchre, fair and comely without, but ugly and deformed within. A wit, without humanity and good-nature, is a pest and  
nuisance;

nuisance; like a venomous wasp, or poisonous serpent, she stings and bites every one she meets, without distinction of friend or foe. And a person of knowledge and learning, without humility and modesty, is generally a vain, conceited, and prattling pedant.

On the other hand, a beautiful young lady, if she is virtuous at the same time, becomes, by that means, at once more virtuous and more beautiful: more virtuous, because her temptations to vice are more frequent and strong; and every time she resists these temptations, she gives the most convincing proof of her untainted chastity and unspotted honour: more beautiful, for what is beauty? It is not a set of features formed with the nicest symmetry and proportion; it is not a complexion composed of the purest red and white; no: but it is both these informed, inspired, lighted up, and animated by the emanations of a virtuous mind: it is chastity, modesty, good-nature, compassion, benevolence, and all the other virtuous dispositions and tender affections streaming forth from the eyes, those windows of the soul, and playing in every lineament of the face. Unless these virtues prevail in the soul, and are marked and expressed in the countenance, the finest features and complexion are little better than the face of a painted baby, or lifeless statue: all is dull, dead, and inanimated; or, what is still worse, gloomy, sour, and sullen.

Hence the graceful blush of modesty, and the pleasing smile of good-nature, so frequently and so awkwardly affected by those who are possessed of neither of these virtues, but perhaps are remarkable for the opposite vices: no matter, they are



are paying a compliment to virtue; they confess, by their hypocrisy and dissimulation, that the appearance of it is amiable and lovely; and if the appearance of it be lovely, how much more must the reality be so? The truth is, virtue is the only thing that is good and amiable: sense, wit, knowledge and learning, are, in their own nature, indifferent; they are either good or bad, just as they are well or ill employed. In the hands of a virtuous person, they may be the means of much good; in the hands of a vicious person, they may be the means of much ill: but, virtue in its own nature and consequences, is certainly and infallibly productive of happiness, as well to the person possessed of it in particular, as to the world in general.

Hence too, my Dear, you will easily perceive what, I believe, you never dreamed of before, that no young lady can be beautiful without virtue. This opinion, I dare say, will make you stare—What! are there not several ladies in London, who have forfeited all title to virtue and honour, and notwithstanding are reckoned among the greatest beauties of the age? are courted, caressed, and almost adored, by crowds of young gentlemen. But softly, my Dear, and don't be in such a hurry; allow me only to ask you a single question: what is the character of these same young gentlemen? are they men of sense, judgment, taste, learning, knowledge, and virtue? or, are they not rather the vain, the ignorant, the silly and foolish, a parcel of empty coxcombs, and abandoned debauchees? Why, as for that, you'll say, you can't answer: but if you cannot answer for that, my Dear, how can you

you be sure, whether these ladies are beautiful or not? For if the young gentlemen, that admire and adore them so much, are not proper judges of beauty, all their praises and compliments go for nothing; they are but mere empty sound, without sense or meaning.

Suppose, my Dear, a deaf person were to tell you, that miss Manley had a charming voice; or a blind one, that lady Aston had a fine complexion; would you believe them, pray? No, you'll reply; because the one, having lost the sense of hearing, can be no judge of sounds, and the other, having lost the sense of seeing, can be no judge of colours; and so far you are right.

Now, what if I should undertake to prove, that these young gentlemen are almost as improper judges of beauty, as the deaf person is of sounds, or the blind one of colours? that they have either lost entirely, or at least greatly corrupted and depraved, those fine and delicate feelings, which alone can distinguish true and genuine beauty, from that which is false and spurious. I don't pretend, my Dear, to be a philosopher, and tho' I were, I know it would be extremely improper to entertain you with abstruse and refined speculations, which, perhaps, you could not understand, or, if you did, could be of no real use to you in the conduct of life. But this, I imagine, is a thing, which is obvious to common sense; and, besides, it may be of service to you, as it will teach you what opinion to form of these empty fellows, and to pay no greater deference to their judgment than it deserves.

Allow me, therefore, to ask you a few questions, and you'll find, that your own answers will prove

prove the point in dispute. First of all then, my Dear, do you think it possible for a person, who has lost all sense of chastity and modesty himself, to be a proper judge of the expressions of these virtues in others? 'Tis absolutely impossible. Can one who has lost all purity of heart and manners, all delicacy of thought and sentiment, who has little remains of humanity, compassion, generosity, and benevolence, can such an one, I say, be a proper judge of the genuine and natural symptoms of these excellent qualities in others? By no means. But I have already proved, that beauty consists, in a great measure, in the expression of these and the like virtues: and, if your young gentlemen are incapable to judge of those virtues, they are equally incapable to judge of true beauty. What now, my Dear, is become of all your boasted beauties of the town, and their smart and witty admirers? Why, vanished, you see, into smoke. Like wax in the fire, they dissolve and melt away at the touch of sound reason and common sense: 'tis a test and criterion, which they are not able to stand: the former are a parcel of artful cheats, and the latter a set of empty fools.

But, my Dear, do not mistake me. I don't mean to insinuate, by any thing I have now said, that the gentlemen you mention are entirely destitute of all these virtues; no: all I mean is, that the less virtuous they are the less capable are they to judge of true beauty; tho' indeed I should imagine, from the wickedness of their lives, and the weakness of their judgment, that their share of these virtues is very small and inconsiderable,

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and even of that share, inconsiderable as it is, they are likely soon to get rid, if they continue to live in the same course of licentiousness and debauchery.

For it may be affirmed in general, that every deviation from the paths of virtue, every indulgence in criminal pleasure, has a natural tendency to vitiate the taste, to corrupt the heart, and to stifle and extinguish all the finer feelings and affections of the mind. A person immersed in sensual pleasure grows less and less rational every day: he degenerates by quick degrees, till at last he sinks down into a mere animal, and loses all relish for every thing that is virtuous, noble, and manly.

The truth is, these men of pleasure, those sons of riot and debauchery, have never been remarkable for their social virtues, but rather for the opposite vices. They are generally the most unfeeling and selfish beings in the world. All their care and labour, all their study and attention, all their time and fortune is employed in ministering to their own low and sensual appetites. They are wholly wrapt up within their own dear selves, regardless of the miseries and calamities of their fellow-creatures. They have no ears to hear, no eyes to see, no hands to relieve the wants and necessities of the poor and distressed. A friend may rot in jail, a brother may leave his country for debt, a sister may go unportioned, nay (shocking and horrid to relate!) even a father, a mother may starve for want, but these fine gentlemen, shall I call them, or rather those monsters of vice and wickedness, will have their full swing of pleasure. And let them have it: blind and un-  
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thinking mortals! ere long a ruined fortune or a crazy constitution will bring them back to their right senses, it will arouse their now sleeping but not extinguished conscience, and make them pay whole years of real pain and misery for every fleeting moment of false pleasure and imaginary delight.

You must excuse, my Dear, this short digression, into which I have been inadvertently led, from an honest zeal and indignation against these debauched and abandoned fellows, the reproach and disgrace of their own sex, the bane and ruin of ours, who deserve to be hissed and hooted, despised and contemned by every sensible and virtuous woman. After the picture I have drawn of them, I need not caution you, I dare say, against their company and conversation. To give you any advice on that head, were offering an affront to your understanding, or suspecting your virtue. In my next letter I shall resume the consideration of those virtues, which I have done little more than mentioned in this. Please to present my compliments to your aunt and all her family. I am

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T T.

## L E T T E R XXXII.

My Dear SOPHY,

AS I promised in my last, I now sit down to explain and recommend to you the several virtues and good qualities, which are necessary to form the character of an accomplished woman. And the first I shall mention is, *temperance*; because, of all the virtues, it is the most personal, the easiest to be understood, the most necessary to be practised, and is, at the same time, the source and foundation of a great many others. Temperance, my Dear, consists in regulating all the bodily appetites, and keeping them within proper bounds; in eating and drinking as much, and no more than is conducive to the health of the body.

It is impossible, however, to determine exactly, what this quantity is; sometimes you may require more; sometimes less will be sufficient: tho', I think, there is one general rule, by which you may easily judge whether or not you have exceeded the bounds of temperance. If, after a meal, you find yourself light, active, and chearful, and readily disposed for any rational exercise, such as reading, writing, drawing, or the like, you may then safely conclude, that you have observed the rules of temperance; but if, on the contrary, you find yourself heavy, sleepy, and drowsy, and altogether unfit for any thing that requires thought and attention, you have then just reason to suspect that you have exceeded the bounds

bounds of temperance: and if you carefully observe this rule, you will never be in danger of committing any great excesses.

But, besides the quantity of your food, you ought likewise to attend to the quality of it; for it is certain, that the same sort of food is not equally proper for every constitution. You will soon learn, by a little experience and observation, what kinds of meat agree with your stomach, and what do not; and, when once you have learned this, you ought to stick to the one, and avoid the other, as much as you can. It will be impossible, however, to observe this maxim invariably. We cannot always follow our own taste, but must frequently, in good manners, sacrifice it to the general taste of the company; for she that cannot do so, upon occasion, must never aspire to the character of a pleasant and agreeable companion; but must lay her account with being reckoned a stiff, formal, and unsociable kind of being.

But tho' you may sometimes be obliged, in complaisance, to eat such kinds of meat as are not to your taste and liking, and do not agree so well with your stomach, still there is an easy remedy; 'tis only eating a little less than usual, and then there will be no danger: thus you may easily prevent the bad effects of the quality, by the smallness of the quantity. In general, I would advise you to live on the most plain and simple food, and to abstain from all rich and high sauces, which only serve to create a false appetite, to inflame the blood, and, to load the body with a variety of bad humours.

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I dare say you have heard the old proverb, "that every person is either a fool or a physician at forty;" by which, I think, is commonly understood, that every one, who has any tolerable share of sense and judgment, must, at that time of life, be thoroughly acquainted with the nature and strength of her own constitution, and what kinds of food are most proper for it. But I don't know why they have fixed this period of wisdom so late. Might not they have said twenty as well as forty? For I'm afraid, she that is a fool at twenty, will not be very wise even at forty. At any rate it is paying but a poor compliment to human nature, to allege, that we cannot learn the true art of life, till once the best part of it is past. But perhaps the meaning is only, that even the slowest and dullest mortals must have acquired this necessary piece of knowledge at the age of forty, or else they never can; but that persons of greater sense and judgment may acquire it much sooner: and, I hope, you will be one of this latter class; I hope, that, even before twenty, you will understand the nature of your own constitution so well as never to injure it, either by the quantity or quality of your food.

Temperance, my Dear, is the best preservative of health, and consequently of beauty, which too commonly go hand in hand; for tho' there may be health without beauty, yet it is absolutely impossible, that there can be any beauty without health. When the body is exhausted and emaciated, and the face pale, wan, and meagre, with sickness, there can be no expression in the eyes and features, and therefore no beauty. I verily believe,

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that nineteen in twenty of the diseases, incident to the human body, are owing to intemperance. Were it not for intemperance, we should have little occasion for physick, which is chiefly employed in removing the bad effects of this vice; in clearing the body from those crude and superfluous humours, which proceed from luxury and excess. Thus *Physick* may be called a kind of *artificial intemperance*, and *temperance* a sort of *natural Physick*.

It is true, there are some diseases, which are owing to a natural weakness of constitution, to the noxious quality of the air, and perhaps to several other unavoidable causes; but even these may, in a great measure, be prevented, or at least kept under and subdued, by a strict and regular course of temperance. There are two remarkable stories to this purpose, related by the *Spectator*, a book which I have formerly recommended to you, and is well worth your perusal. The one is of *Socrates*, an ancient philosopher, who, tho' he lived in Athens during a plague, that swept away great numbers of the inhabitants, yet never caught the least infection; which the writers of those times unanimously ascribe to that uninterrupted temperance, which he always observed. The other of one *Lewis Cornaro*, a Venetian, who was of an infirm constitution, till about forty, when, by obstinately persisting in an exact course of temperance, he recovered a perfect state of health, which he continued to enjoy till he had passed his hundredth year, and at last died without pain or agony, like one who falls asleep. In the former instance, you see a disease arising from an external cause, entirely prevented

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ed by the force of temperance : in the latter, you observe a disease, perhaps a complication of diseases, springing from an internal cause, from the badness of the constitution itself, and which the unhappy, but brave sufferer brought into the world with him, perfectly subdued and extirpated by the same means. In a word, were people to live according to the strict rules of temperance ; were they never to eat or drink any more or less than nature requires, they would not only enjoy a better state of health, but would likewise draw out their lives to a greater old age than most of them do now-a-days attain.

It must be confessed, however, that it is no easy matter precisely to hit this golden mean of temperance. Not one in twenty, perhaps, has sense enough to discern it, and for certain, not one in five hundred, (I believe I might have said in five thousand,) has resolution enough to practise it. But the nearer any one approaches to it, so much the longer and happier will her life be, and the farther she recedes from it, so much the shorter, and more miserable will it prove.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to recommend to you too great an abstinence, which doctor Green, our physician, has frequently told me is still more dangerous than a little intemperance. For, though the latter naturally tends to load and overcharge the body with a variety of bad humours, yet these, he says, if they are not allowed to increase to too great a quantity, nor to mix too intimately with the blood, may be easily carried off by physic and a proper regimen ; whereas the former deprives the body of its natural nourishment, dries and shrivels up the finer vessels

sels for want of a proper supply of juices, and wastes and emaciates the whole habit to such a degree, that, he assures me, it is almost out of the power of medicine to apply an effectual remedy.

However uncommon this error may be, yet I have known several young ladies run into it; who observing the terrible havock which intemperance had made on the constitution of others, and fearing the bad effects of it on their own, put on a firm resolution to observe the most rigid temperance. But unluckily they overshot the mark, and by endeavouring to be strictly temperate, they become too abstemious; and thus did greater harm to their constitution than they possibly could have done, had they even indulged themselves in a little intemperance.

Notwithstanding all that I have said, I must own it would be extremely hard, were every the least deviation from the strict rules of temperance to affect the health and impair the constitution. This were to render life wretched and unhappy indeed. For I think it is an old proverb, which I have either read or heard somewhere, that *the person who lives physically lives miserably*. She, who in her exercise, food, and sleep, is perpetually afraid, of exceeding, and tremble at the very thoughts of the bad effects that might flow from too great an indulgence, cannot possibly be happy: the real pressure of the evils themselves could hardly make her more miserable, than does the imaginary prospect.

But, happily for us, this is not the case. The rules of temperance are not so strict and severe, nor is the violation of them so dangerous and fatal.

tal. At one time we may eat a little more than enough, at another we may eat a little less. Thus we may correct the intemperance of yesterday by the abstinence of to-day: and supply the abstinence of to-day by the indulgence of to-morrow. This is not only what we may do with safety; but, if I may believe our physician, what we really ought sometimes to do in point of prudence: for he tells me, that it is very conducive to the health of the body, that it improves and strengthens the constitution, and enables us the better to struggle and combat with diseases, when they come. Whereas, should we always observe the most regular and rigid temperance, if at any time we happen to be seized with a distemper, the physician hardly knows what to do with us, or how to restore us to our former health and vigour. He cannot put us into a more strict and temperate regimen, than we have already observed; so that he is deprived of one of the most gentle and effectual means of recovery; and is, therefore, obliged to have recourse to other methods, more severe, disagreeable, and dangerous.

Perhaps there may be some truth in what the doctor says; though I have mentioned it, not so much with a view to make you indulge yourself in any voluntary and unnecessary excesses, as to reconcile you to those little irregularities, which you will frequently be obliged to comply with; and the bad effects of these you must always endeavour to correct by next day's abstinence, or by exercise, which is another excellent preservative of health, and without which all the temperance in the world will not do. But as this is a thing, to which most young ladies are sufficiently inclined



inclined of their own accord, I need not spend any time in exhorting you to it.

But the post, my dear, is just a going, and therefore I must conclude. What I have further to add on this subject, you may expect to receive in my next. Farewell, my dear Sophy; may God Almighty assist you in acquiring all the virtues of a good life, and particularly that of temperance. I ever am

Yours, &c.

PORTIA.

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### LETTER XXXIII.

My dear SOPHY,

**I**N my last letter, you know, I endeavoured to explain the nature of temperance, and to excite you to the practice of it, from a regard to your own health. But, my Dear, there is still a higher and a nobler motive to the observance of this virtue. You are bound to observe it, not only from interest, but likewise from duty; not only as it is conducive to the health of your body; but also in obedience to the command of your Creator. He hath blessed you with a sound and healthful constitution, and therefore it is your duty to preserve it, as long as you can, in the same good condition; and never to weaken or impair it by luxury and intemperance.

This, my Dear, is a point, in which young people are apt to commit the most egregious mistakes. They fondly imagine, that, because  
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heaven has endued them with a good constitution, they may therefore use the greater freedom with it; that they may indulge themselves in every thing they please, and live as they list. Sensible and pious thought truly! or rather foolish and impious to the last degree! Because heaven has been kind, must they therefore be ungrateful? must their gratitude diminish in proportion to the greatness of the favour they have received?

Suppose you were to receive ten thousand pounds to your fortune, and your youngest sister only two; are you on that account, to become less dutiful and obedient to your parents than she? or less careful and prudent in the management of your own affairs? If you did, methinks it would be a very good reason for their resuming their ill-placed favour; and for taking from you what you did not deserve, and had not sense to manage.

And why may not the great Creator of all things, in his infinite wisdom and justice, act in the same manner? Why may not he deprive those of health and strength, who, instead of making these valuable qualities subservient to the interests of virtue and religion, employ them only in the service of vice and wickedness? And who knows, but he possibly does so? or, rather, who knows not, that he actually does so? A cold, a fall, a thousand unforeseen accidents, will answer the purpose. These, indeed, in the language of this world, are foolishly imputed to chance; but, in the language of heaven, they are justly ascribed to providence. They are punishments, and deserved punishments too, inflicted upon them, for their luxury, intemperance, and debauchery.

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The truth is, health and strength of body are talents committed to our care and management, which we are not at liberty to squander and throw away as we please, but for which we must account as strictly and severely as for any other endowment whatever. Remember, therefore, my Dear, that in every act of intemperance, you are guilty not only of the greatest folly, but likewise of the blackest ingratitude, and the most daring impiety. And I don't know but those, who shorten their lives by intemperance, are as criminal in the sight of God, as those who put an immediate end to them by more violent means. For, if a person swallow a draught of mortal poison, and knowing it to be such, where is the difference whether it produces its effect in thirty minutes or in thirty years? Does this alter the nature of the crime, or free the criminal from the guilt of self-murder? In the judgment, perhaps, of short-sighted mortals it may: but whether or not it does so in the eye of the all-seeing and impartial Judge of the universe, is at least a question.

And yet, is not intemperance a deadly poison, that rankles in the veins, and, however slow in its operations, is nevertheless certain and infallible in its effects? It gradually undermines and ruins the constitution, and brings many an one, in the flower of their age, to an untimely and unexpected death. Nine tenths, I dare say, of the human species fall a sacrifice to this fell destroyer. War, famine, pestilence, and old age, joined together, may slay their thousands; but intemperance, alone and by itself, slays its ten thousands.

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As therefore, my Dear, you would wish to arrive at a good old age, at that full period of life, which nature and the Author of nature intended you should reach, you must take particular care never to fall into this dangerous and pernicious vice of intemperance.

What a silly and ridiculous apology is it, which the luxurious and intemperate generally make for each other. "Poor man, say they, of such an  
 " one, he rather drinks too hard, lives too high,  
 " and is ruining his constitution as fast as he  
 " can; but he is a good innocent soul, and does  
 " harm to nobody but himself." What! does harm to nobody but himself! gross and stupid nonsense!—he does harm to—all the world, both by the pernicious influence of his bad example, which may, and probably will, continue to operate, when he is dead and gone, and as he likewise disqualifies himself for performing the duties of social life. Was he born for himself alone? If he was, then let him be excluded and cut off from all social intercourse and correspondence; let him be shut up in some lonely cell, and condemned to perpetual solitude and retirement. But if he was not; if he was born for society, then let him remember that he is bound to contribute all that lies in his power to the happiness and welfare of his fellow-creatures; that there is a large catalogue of social duties which he is obliged to perform, and which he cannot neglect without the greatest injustice and impiety. Has he no family to maintain? no son to educate? no daughter to portion? Has he no parents to succour and comfort? no poor sister or brother to relieve? no distressed friend to assist?



Has he no post, civil or military, to attend? no trade or employment to mind? Or, if he is such a selfish, solitary, and useless being as to have none of all these, still is he not bound to shew a good example to the rest of the world? If he has not courage and resolution enough to perform any of the duties of social life himself, is he not obliged, at least, to excite and animate others to the performance of them?

But, my Dear, the truth of it is, these luxurious and intemperate sots have all the duties I have now mentioned and many more to perform; but they have something else to mind, which to them is more interesting and important; they have their own dear bodies to cram and pamper, or rather to ruin and destroy; they have their own base, low, and groveling appetites to gratify; and to the gratification of these they will sacrifice every virtue, private, public, and divine. What is it to them, how a father, a mother, a sister, or a brother lives, if they live happily themselves. They were made, they think, or at least they live as if they were made for themselves only, and therefore they will not be disturbed with any care or concern about others. Wife and family, friends and relations, may perish, if they will, for them, but they must, and they will enjoy their pleasures. Thus they doze away their whole lives in eating, drinking, and sleeping; in a continued course of animal gratifications; a state of the grossest stupidity and lethargy, hardly one degree above the brute creation.

But, my Dear, I find I am forgetting myself; I am insensibly got into the description of a  
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male instead of a female character : for, I believe, it will be allowed even by the men themselves, that, however many originals of this picture may be found in their sex, yet there are few, if any, to be found in ours, except among the very dregs and refuse of it. Would to God the same might be said of theirs ! But I'm afraid it cannot ; I'm afraid, that not only among the meanest and lowest of mankind, but even among the highest and most honourable (if riches and titles can confer that dignity) there are many, too many, who may justly claim this character as their own.

This, however, I don't mention, in order to inspire you with a high opinion of your own sex, nor a low opinion of the other ; but only to shew you, that, as intemperance is a very uncommon vice among women of a polite and genteel education, you ought therefore to shun it with the greater care ; not only as it is wicked and immoral, but likewise as it is low, base and dishonourable. I might mention many other arguments to persuade you to the practice of temperance ; but, as I believe you are as little inclined to the opposite vice, as any young lady in England, I hope what I have already said, will be fully sufficient. Your papa, your brothers and sisters join me in wishing you all manner of happiness. Please to offer my kind compliments to your aunt and the rest of the family. I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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## LETTER XXXIV.

My dear SOPHY,

**M**Y time, for some months past, has been so entirely engrossed with company and business, that I have been obliged, in some measure, to interrupt my epistolary correspondence. But now being somewhat more at leisure, I shall resume the subject of your education.

In my two last letters, you know, I endeavoured to explain to you, as well as I could, the nature of temperance, and to convince you of the great utility and importance of that virtue. In this I shall give you my sentiments of another virtue, which is no less, or, rather, which is infinitely more necessary; nay, I will venture to say, which is the most necessary and indispensable of all others, and without which, wit, beauty, sense, knowledge, and every other female accomplishment, are not only useless, but even pernicious and destructive.

You will easily guess, my Dear, that the virtue I mean is chastity, the greatest glory and ornament of our sex, and what most effectually recommends us to the love and esteem of the other. Perhaps, I may be accused of indelicacy, in entertaining a lady, so very young as you are, with a discourse on such a tender subject; tho', I think, the character I bear as your mother, and consequently the concern I must have for your happiness, may well free me from any imputation of that kind: for I don't see how any thing can be called indelicate, which a virtuous mother can  
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write to a virtuous daughter. Besides, as it will be allowed to be extremely difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to fix the precise time when a young lady should receive instructions on this head, every mother of consequence is left, in a great measure, to follow her own judgment; and, I must confess, it is my opinion, that it is much better to be a whole year too early, than one day too late: the inconveniences of the former method, if indeed there be any, are very trifling and inconsiderable, but the bad effects of the latter are always dangerous, and frequently fatal and irreparable.

Young as you are, my Dear, you cannot be ignorant of what I mean by the virtue of chastity; and therefore I shall observe the rules of delicacy so far, as not to explain the nature of it more particularly. Allow me only to mention a few things, which may serve to convince you of its inestimable value: and to give you a few plain directions, by the observance of which, you may easily preserve it pure and untainted.

Whilst a young lady is possessed of this virtue, she is blest with the approbation of her own conscience, beloved and caressed by her friends and relations, esteemed and respected by all her acquaintance. But if, by some unlucky and fatal accident, she is once deprived of this precious jewel, that moment she loses all inward peace and tranquillity of mind; she is forsaken and abandoned by her nearest friends and relations; she is despised and contemned, hissed and hooted by all the world. Perhaps the humane and good-natured may pity her misfortunes, but seldom, or never, relieve her distresses: the rigidly virtuous  
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and severe consign her over, without reluctance, to instant and irretrievable ruin; the worthless part of the male sex ridicule and laugh at her; and the abandoned part of the females hail her a sister of their own; and, with hellish and fiend-like joy, exult in the happy thoughts of having gained another proselyte to the ways of vice and wickedness. What a terrible, what a horrid downfall is this! fallen headlong from the highest summit of honour, wealth, and happiness, to the lowest depth of disgrace, poverty, wretchedness, and utter destruction!

And yet, my Dear, great as this downfall is, it has been the fate of several young ladies, blest with all the advantages you enjoy, and, perhaps, with many more; but all their fairest hopes, all their finest prospects, were, at once, blasted and destroyed by one false step, the loss of their chastity; for, this lost, every thing that is dear and valuable to a woman, is lost along with it; the peace of her own mind, the love of her friends, the esteem of the world, the enjoyment of present pleasure, and all hopes of future happiness, at least in this life.

How many hundreds, my Dear, (I might say thousands) of wretched and forlorn creatures are there in London, who have been ruined and undone by this means! ashamed to shew their faces in public, when some of them might have been sparkling in a front box at a play, or dancing a minuet in a polite assembly, and all of them living in honour: pining, and almost starving with poverty, when they might have been enjoying plenty and affluence: sinking into the grave, oppressed with loathsome and mortal diseases, when,  
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by preserving their chastity, they might have preserved their health and happiness.

You knew, my Dear, the once happy, but now wretched, miss Grey. She was possessed of wit, beauty, sense, knowledge, character, and fortune, in as high a degree, as most young ladies in England; but she was ——— my heart bleeds when I think on her miserable fate ——— she was decoyed, deceived, and at last abandoned by a perfidious and inhuman villain. Banished from her father's house, deserted by her friends, shunned by her acquaintance, and thrown on the wide world, what could she do? or whither could she go? Poverty, shame, infamy and disgrace, in their most hideous and ugly forms, stared her in the face, and drove the poor desponding and distracted creature into a course of life, at the very thoughts of which she would once have shuddered with horror. Her father stripped her of her fortune, the world deprived her of her character, her wit degenerated into obscenity, her beauty was changed into deformity, and her sense and knowledge served only to render her more dextrous and expert in the ways of vice and wickedness. At last, wearied and worn out with a life of lewdness and debauchery, she fled to the Magdalen-house, where, I am told, she is now endeavouring to wash out the guilt of her former crimes, by her tears and repentance, and preparing to enter the world afresh, in the humble character of a servant: for I am well assured, that her friends are resolved never to see her more, nor to afford her any relief or assistance. Thus she, who might have been the mistress of an honourable and wealthy family herself, is now  
condemned

condemned to be one of the meanest of servants: she, who long ere this time, might have been sitting at the head of a splendid table, receiving the compliments and civilities of all the company, must now be doomed, perhaps, to do the low drudgery of a dirty scullion. Hard and cruel reverse of fortune! or rather sad and fatal effects of vice; for all this load of calamities is brought upon her head, not by the caprice of fortune, but by her own folly and indiscretion; and by one single act of folly too, by the loss of chastity: this the source of all her miseries! this the fountain of all her woes! to this she ought justly to ascribe all the hardships she has already suffered, and the long train of misfortunes which still lie before her. Thus, for a short moment of false and imaginary pleasure, she must pay a long, tedious life of real pain, sorrow, and suffering. In this picture, my Dear, which is as true as it is terrible, you see the dangerous and destructive consequences of lewdness and debauchery: tremble at the very thoughts of such an abominable vice; and learn, from the folly and misery of others, to be wise, virtuous, and happy yourself.

Don't imagine, my Dear, that what I have now said is only my own private opinion; no: it is, and ever has been, the opinion of the wise and good, in all ages and nations of the world. In some particular countries especially, this virtue of chastity has been held in such high repute and estimation, that rather than lose it, or survive the loss of it, some have even chosen to be deprived of life itself.

It

It is reported of one Lucretia, a Roman lady, that, having been ravished by Sextus, eldest son to Tarquin, the king of that country, she took a dagger in her hand; and, after having publicly exhorted her relations to revenge her injury on the barbarous ravisher, she plunged it in her bosom, at once putting an end to her life and to her disgrace. And such was the opinion, which the Romans entertained of the heinous nature of this crime, as well of the fatal consequences which followed the commission of it, that the whole nation rose in arms, and not only dethroned the king and banished the royal family, but even, if I may speak so, banished kings in general, making a decree, that, for the future, no king should ever sway the sceptre over the Roman people, but that their government, instead of a monarchy, should thenceforth become a republic.

I dare say, my Dear, you have heard the common observation, that chastity is as necessary and ornamental in a woman, as courage is in a man: but, in fact, it is infinitely more so. For, tho' perhaps a coward may be as contemptible among the men, as a prostitute is among the women, still there is this material difference between the two cases, that if a man lose his character for want of courage, in one instance, he may, by some extraordinary effort of valour, recover it in another; but a woman's character once lost, can never be regained: like a fallen star, she sets to rise no more. Not floods of tears, not whole years of sorrow and repentance, not the most constant practice of all the other virtues of a good life, not even the most rigid observance of the rules of chastity for the future, nothing will  
avail :



avail: they can never restore her lost reputation, nor replace her in the rank of pure vestals. And this single consideration, methinks, were it but deeply impressed on the minds of young ladies, might of itself be sufficient to preserve their chastity incorrupted, and to make them tremble and shudder at the most distant apprehensions of losing a treasure, which is so precious in the possession, and so irrecoverable when lost. But, as our best and firmest resolutions are frequently overpowered by the strength and number of temptations, I shall point out some of the principal incentives to lewdness, which you ought carefully and constantly to avoid.

First of all then, my Dear, let me advise you to shun all kind of luxury and intemperance, which is doubly an enemy to this virtue of chastity. For, it not only inflames the blood, and raises the passions: but, at the same time, darkens and clouds the mind, and renders it less capable to resist and regulate the inferior appetites. It debases and corrupts the heart: it gives us too strong a relish for the pleasures of sense, and too great a disgust for those of a rational nature. It takes off from that purity of thought, that delicacy of sentiment, that fine sensibility, if I may speak so, which recoils and starts back at the least appearance of any thing that is gross, indecent or immoral. But temperance has a quite contrary effect: it keeps all the inferior appetites in due subordination to the direction and government of reason, and preserves the faculty of reason itself clear and strong; clear, to perceive the most distant approaches of danger; and strong, to repel the most violent assaults.

Shun

Shun likewise, my Dear, with the same care and diligence, every thing that can offend a modest eye, or a chaste ear; all indecent pictures and representations, all lewd and immodest language. Indeed, the first part of this advice, it will be no easy matter to observe; for it is a melancholy truth, that the dining and drawing-rooms of many people, even sometimes of the most virtuous and religious, are adorned, or rather disgraced, with such paintings and engravings, as are fit only for houses of bad fame.

What motive these people can have for buying and exposing to view such unseemly pictures, I cannot well conceive. If it be to follow the fashion, 'tis but a poor apology. To follow the fashion in things that are good, is commendable; to follow the fashion in things indifferent, is adviseable; but to follow it in things that are immoral, is altogether inexcusable: to be singular in such a case, is to be virtuous. If it be to gratify their own humour, 'tis but paying a sorry compliment to themselves, as it is but a poor sign either of the elegance of their taste, or the goodness of their hearts. If it be to improve the taste of their children in the polite arts, 'tis certainly a very dangerous, and, in my opinion, a very ineffectual method: for even supposing it could improve their taste, still it is at the expence of their virtue; and this is such a foolish and impious exchange, as methinks, no wise and good person would chuse to make. Besides, it deserves to be well considered, whether any thing can properly be said to improve the taste, that has a natural tendency to corrupt the heart.

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At any rate, might not the same end be as well answered by pictures of a virtuous nature, calculated to convey some useful lesson of morality. Would not the representation of a dutiful son, boldly exposing himself to imminent danger, and even to certain death, to protect the life of an aged father from the mortal stab of an insidious assassin; or the representation of a beautiful daughter, nobly foregoing all the vanities and gaieties of life, and rejecting the warmest addresses of her most importunate lovers, to attend upon a sick and distressed mother: I say, would not such representations as these be as well adapted to improve the taste of young people, as your naked Venus's, Apollo's, or Cupid's? The design, at least, would be as natural, and I don't see why the execution might not be rendered as perfect.

Such indecent pictures, my Dear, you will never see at your aunt's, nor, you may be assured, at your papa's neither, when you come to pay us a visit in the country; and therefore, perhaps, it may be deemed impertinent in me to find fault with the taste and conduct of other people; and, to be sure, it would be so, were it not, that you are in danger of suffering, nay, that you certainly must suffer, by this bad taste of theirs. For, in the course of your visiting, it will be impossible for you to avoid seeing many pictures, which, instead of being exposed to the view, should be industriously concealed from the eyes of young persons.

Perhaps, these people may reply, that, if you don't chuse to see their pictures, you may forbear the visit, and stay at home. But this is a very  
silly

illy answer: 'tis rather the language of pique than of reason; were we to forsake our friends on account of every little circumstance that offends us, we should be obliged to live in perpetual solitude and retirement. When therefore, my Dear, you happen to visit in such families, let me advise you to be very cautious and circumspect: carefully keep off your eyes from all indecent and indelicate pictures; for, besides the danger immediately arising to yourself, I should imagine, that any modest young lady would be ashamed to be caught in the very act of looking at them.

Such a conduct will not only be the most prudent in itself, but will likewise be a tacit reprimand to the master or mistress of the family; for, as these people generally pretend to be persons of taste, you cannot mortify their pride more effectually, than by overlooking and despising what they reckon their curiosities; and this mortification, at least their pride and vanity should always receive from every modest and discreet lady.

With regard to the other part of the advice, there is no less danger. It is true, you will never hear any lewd or indecent language from the chaste and modest part of your own sex; and with such only, I hope, you will converse. Nor, indeed, will you ever hear any thing of this kind from the sensible and virtuous part of the other sex; but of these, how inconsiderable is the number? What a small proportion do these bear to the foolish and the vicious? to the motley herd of empty fops, vain fribblers, shallow coxcombs, and abandoned rakes? who, recommended, forthwith, either by their rank or fortune, or supported,



ed, perhaps, by mere impudence, intrude themselves into almost every company, where they never fail to shock and offend the chaste and delicate ear, by their lewd and immodest language.

'Tis hard to say, whether these empty fellows are most the objects of pity, contempt, or detestation. Pitiful wretches they certainly are, for they have no subject of conversation but one, and that is obscenity; stop their mouths on this subject, and you stop them entirely: they can neither think nor talk of any thing else. Contemptible dunces they must undoubtedly be reckoned, for, instead of being sensible of their own ignorance and stupidity, they think they are mighty learned and ingenious; whilst they are very obscene, they imagine they are very witty. Detestable miscreants they must surely be accounted, for, not content with being lewd and immoral themselves, they would have all the rest of the world to follow their wicked example; by giving full vent to the filthy overflowings of their own corrupted hearts, they endeavour to corrupt and pollute the yet untainted hearts of others.

These, my Dear, are the pests and plagues of all genteel company, from which, therefore, they ought to be expelled and banished without form or ceremony; without regard to rank, family, fortune, or any other consideration whatever: let them first learn to behave like gentlemen, and then they may expect to be treated as such.

You will think, my Dear, that I express myself with some warmth and severity against these debauched and abandoned rakes; and no wonder that I do: for I have frequently been obliged myself, and I have known many others obliged to  
leave

leave several agreeable companies, merely to shun their rude and impertinent language.

Such fellows as these you are in no danger of seeing at your aunt's: she has too much good sense and too great a regard for decency and decorum, ever to admit into her house any such visitants, however dignified by their titles, riches, employments, or any other external circumstances.

But such, I'm afraid, you may sometimes see in the course of your visiting; in all which cases, let me advise you, my Dear, to keep the strictest guard upon every part of your behaviour. If any of these fellows begin to talk in a lewd and immodest strain, seem at first not to understand them; but if they persist in their impertinence, without being checked or restrained by the mistress of the family, then leave the company outright.

Should the lady, at next meeting, appear to be displeased at your abrupt departure, tell her that you had my orders not only for what you then did, but also for behaving in the same manner on every occasion of the like nature: and that I think every mistress of a family is as accountable for the conversation she affords to her guests, as for any other part of the entertainment.

I don't say, that she has a right of commanding the company to talk on any one particular subject; no: this would be the height of arrogance and presumption, and altogether inconsistent with the rules of politeness and good-breeding. But this I say, that, let the subject of conversation be what it will, it is her duty to observe, that it be always kept within bounds of modesty and decorum; and that, whenever it begins to exceed these

these bounds, she may and ought to correct the presumptuous offender, and to remind him, that he is in the company of virtuous ladies, and not of abandoned prostitutes.

After what I have said, my Dear, about shunning the conversation of these debauched rakes, it were needless to give you any further caution about shunning their company, which, I dare say, you will always carefully do, except when you are necessarily drawn into it in the common course of visiting; though were you sure of meeting one of these fellows in any particular family, I should think that a very good reason for delaying your visit till another time. With regard to the company of men in general, I may possibly give you my sentiments in some other letter.

Another great preservative of chastity is, carefully to abstain from reading all plays, novels, or romances, that have the least tendency to corrupt and debauch the heart. What these are, I will not take upon me to say; for having never read any of them myself, I don't so much as know their names. But, as in this respect I have already advised you to conduct yourself by the direction of your aunt, I need not be more particular.

I might mention several other methods, which are very conducive to the preservation of chastity; but these will come to be considered more properly under the article of modesty.

Before I conclude, however, let me entreat you, my dear Sophy, to implore the aid and assistance of Almighty God in this and in every thing else you undertake, without which all your own endeavours will prove fruitless and ineffectual. And that he may be graciously pleased to  
bless

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bles you with chastity, and with all the other virtues of a good life, is the sincere prayer of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your fond and affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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LETTER XXXV.

From SOPHIA to her Mother PORTIA.

Dear Mamma,

**Y**OUR letters on temperance and chastity I received in due course. My aunt, I believe, who carefully inspects every part of my conduct, will do me the justice to acknowledge, that I have always been pretty observant of both these virtues. The rules of temperance, I think, I have never transgressed in any material instance; and, I am sure, I never had the least inclination, nor ever discovered the least propensity to violate those of chastity. But, I must confess at the same time, that till the receipt of your letters, I never understood the nature of these virtues so distinctly, nor was so fully convinced of their great value and importance. Your last letter, especially, has made such a deep impression upon my mind, that methinks I could now sacrifice every thing to the preservation of my chastity:

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rather



rather than lose my honour, I would cheerfully lose my life.

Poor miss Grey, Mamma, I remember extremely well, and had formerly heard some indistinct account of her misfortune; but never knew that her condition was so deplorable and desperate, as you represent it. The short but affecting history you wrote me of her miserable fate, pierced me to the very heart, and made the tears gush into my eyes: I am sure I shall never forget it so long as I live.

But, my dear Mamma, what I have chiefly to beg of you at present, is, that you will be so good as to write me your sentiments of the virtue of modesty, which I think you gave me some reason to expect by what you said in the close of your last letter. I am the more anxious to have your opinion of this matter, as it is a subject, on which my aunt has lately lectured my cousin and me pretty severely. She alleges, that we are very often faulty in this respect, but owns, at the same time, that our faults seem chiefly to proceed from ignorance. This, however, she will not allow to be a sufficient apology; for though ignorance, she says, be less criminal than impudence, yet it is far from being excusable in young ladies of our age and education. Besides, she assures us, the world will be more apt to impute such faults to want of modesty than to want of sense; for that, when the same action may proceed from different motives, few people have the humanity and good-nature to ascribe it to the best. Please to give my duty to my papa, and my kind love to my sisters and brothers. My aunt presents her compli-

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compliments to you and the rest of the family. I am,

My dear Mamma,

Your dutiful daughter,

SOPHIA.

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LETTER XXXVI.

From PORTIA to her Daughter SOPHIA.

My dear SOPHY,

**Y**OUR last letter, which I received a few weeks ago, gave me the greatest satisfaction. I was particularly pleased to hear you express such a noble resolution, of preserving your chastity pure and untainted. May God Almighty assist you in this, and in every other virtuous undertaking. Agreeably to my own promise, and in compliance with your desire, I shall now give you my sentiments of modesty, and some other female virtues. Modesty, my Dear, is the outward expression of a pure and chaste mind: and therefore, every word you speak, every action you perform, every gesture of your body, every look of your eyes, every part of your dress; in fine, every thing, by which the inward dispositions of the mind can be expressed and discovered, comes under the regulation of this virtue.

Modesty, as it relates to dress, has already been considered under that article: as it relates to conversation, it has been, in some measure, explained, in treating of that and the subject of chastity. After the advice I then gave you, to shun the lewd and immodest conversation of others, it would certainly be unnecessary to use any other arguments to dissuade you from running into the same error yourself. There is something in this practice so base and vulgar, as well as so indecent and abominable, that I will not even suppose you capable of a thing, at once so unpolite and immoral.

But, my Dear, modesty regards not only the matter of your conversation, but also the manner of it; not only what you say, but likewise how you say it. And, indeed, this is such an essential part of modesty, that it frequently appears more visibly in the manner of expressing a thing, than in the nature of the thing itself. There is lady Langley; she returns thanks for a favour, and to people as good as herself too, with such a careless and indifferent, and sometimes indeed with such a haughty and over-bearing air, that a by-stander, who only observes her manner, would be apt to conclude, that she was rather bestowing one upon some of her dependants, or giving orders to her footman: whilst miss Boothby, on the other hand, even bestows a favour with that engaging and winning address, with that humility and condescension, that one would really imagine, she was rather receiving, than conferring an obligation.

Nothing, my Dear, is more inconsistent with modesty, than to talk with a loud, shrill, and  
harsh

harsh tone of voice. This is very unbecoming, even in a man, but much more in a woman, and most of all in a young woman, whose accent should be low, smooth, and gentle, an emblem of the inward softness and delicacy of her mind. It is no less inconsistent with the rules of modesty, to talk in a positive and peremptory strain. This is scarce tolerable, even when you are talking of things that cannot be contradicted; but is absolutely intolerable, when you are speaking of matters that are of a doubtful nature, as indeed most subjects of conversation are. 'Tis the duty of a young lady to talk with an air of diffidence, as if she proposed what she said, rather with a view to receive information herself, than to inform and instruct the company.

Modesty, my Dear, as it relates to gesture, is of a very extensive nature; and, though its outward signs are not so easily perceived by vulgar and undiscerning eyes, they are nevertheless most certain and infallible. I hope I shall not be considered as going out of my own depth, or as saying any thing above your comprehension, when I tell you, that there is no passion or affection of the mind, which may not be expressed by some correspondent motion of the body. I dare say, you may have seen something of this kind at the play-house, in what they call dumb show. I remember myself to have seen one actress sing a song without the least visible motion, and another perfectly mute, standing by, and endeavouring to humour and express all the different passions contained in it, by suitable gestures of the body.

But,



But we need not have recourse to the play-house for what we may see in the daily occurrences of common life. Whence is it that a bow in the male sex, and a courtesy in the female, are always considered as marks of respect and esteem? whence, but because these postures of the body are naturally expressive of humility and submission? Nay, what is more common than to hear people say of such an one, only by observing his gait and gesture, that he is a proud, haughty, and imperious fellow; of another, that he is a grave, sober, and sedate man; and of a third, that he is an empty, shallow, and conceited coxcomb; and so of others.

Now, my Dear, if this be the case with all the other passions and affections of the mind, why mayn't it be the same with modesty too? The truth is, this virtue is expressed by a certain decent, graceful, and composed gesture, equally removed from the pert and forward air of impudence on the one hand, and the awkward and clumsy gate of sheepishness on the other: and to teach you this graceful gait, ought to be the principal, if not the only end of dancing. As for those ridiculous and fantastic figures in dancing, which either have no meaning at all, or serve only to shew into how many odd and unnatural postures the body may be thrown, they are quite below the notice of a gentlewoman, and are fit only for harlequins and mountebanks.

Modesty, as it regards the countenance, and especially the expression of the eyes, is no less worthy of your attention, because, perhaps, it appears more in this than in any one thing whatever. Young as you are, my Dear, you cannot be

be ignorant, that all the different passions of the mind may be painted and expressed in the countenance. Anger and meekness, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, pride and humility, impudence and modesty, have each a particular air of the face, naturally adapted to express them; and whatever passion happens to be uppermost in the mind, the countenance will take its tincture, and complexion from thence. Thus joy is expressed by a pleasing smile, sorrow by a dejected look, pride by a supercilious frown, humility by an unassuming air, impudence by a wanton glance, modesty by a chastised mien; and so of the rest. And tho' I am no great friend to physiognomy, or the judging of people's characters by their looks, yet I believe, there is something in it. Tho' I know the face is sometimes a false glass, still I am persuaded it is as often, and much oftener, a true one; and that the countenance is frequently a faithful picture of the mind.

Indeed, I can very well conceive why a woman of bad fame should affect the look of innocence: because it may the more effectually answer her purpose; nothing being so amiable, even in the eyes of the profligate and debauched themselves, as true modesty. But why a young lady of unspotted virtue should assume the look of impudence, is quite beyond my comprehension: the meaning of it (if it has any meaning at all) must be, that she wants to get rid of her chastity as soon as possible. For my own part, I cannot easily figure to myself any other reason. If she thinks, by this means, to give herself an air of spirit and vivacity, she is greatly mistaken; for

for spirit and vivacity are as different from impudence, as any two things can well be.

But, my Dear, not only does the countenance receive a transient tincture from the passion, which happens, for the present, to be most prevalent in the mind: what is still more, if we indulge that passion frequently and habitually, it will come at last to give the countenance such a particular cast and air, as it will not be in our power to alter or throw off at pleasure, but will continue fixed and invariable through our whole lives; and will go a great way towards determining our character, at least with the generality of the world, who have no other opportunity to judge of our tempers, but from our looks and appearance; so that we shall pass for proud or humble, peevish or good-natured, impudent or modest, just as our countenance is expressive of any of these dispositions.

Thus, you see, my Dear, there is, at least, some truth in physiognomy; and that it concerns every young lady to be very careful of her looks, since her character depends as much upon these as upon any other part of her behaviour. The only advice I can give you in this case is, never to entertain any lewd or immodest thought in your breast, and then you will never be in danger of expressing any thing of that nature in your countenance. If you would wish to have a modest look, you must endeavour to have a modest mind; for without the latter, the former can hardly exist.

I know it is, now-a-days, considered as a sign of rusticity and ignorance to allow the countenance to be an index to the mind, or to express those

those particular passions with which it is affected. A certain unmeaning uniformity of face is now studied and practised as the height of politeness and good-breeding, or rather to have such an absolute command over our features, as to be able, on occasion, to assume any appearance; to smile when we are not pleased, and to sigh when we are not sorry; in a word, to regulate our looks, not by the feelings of our own minds, but by the forms of civility and good-manners.

All that can be said for this method, is, that it is one of the many subterfuges of vice and wickedness. A virtuous person has no occasion to use it; for as she never entertains any thoughts but what are chaste and innocent, she has no interest in concealing them; she is not afraid to let her face speak the language of her heart. But, if people will indulge to vicious passions and corrupt affections, they are certainly in the right to conceal them as much as possible; for, tho' it will not render them more virtuous, it will, at least, give them more the appearance of virtue, and make them more tolerable and agreeable companions.

An envious person, for instance, when she hears of the happy marriage of any of her acquaintance, smiles and rejoices; not because she is really glad: on the contrary, it is fifty to one, but she is inwardly vexed and uneasy; for envy is always vexed at the happiness of others; but she smiles, because it is the fashion, and she would not be unfashionable for all the world; no, not even to gratify her favourite passion. On the other hand, when she hears of any of her friends having met with a disappointment, she



sighs and laments; not because she is sincerely sorry; no: that is very improbable, and indeed next to impossible; for the misfortunes and disappointments of others, is the most delicious feast that envy can enjoy: but she sighs, because it is the mode, and she would not be singular on any account; rather than be singular, she would almost take the trouble of being virtuous, were it not that, by the help of hypocrisy, she can easily save appearances.

The truth is, my Dear, the countenance of such a person is so far from being an index to her mind, that it is rather a mask to conceal it. When she seems to be well pleased, it is ten to one but she is sorry; and when she seems to be sorry, it is as probable that she is well pleased: her sighs and smiles she puts on, just as she does her birthday dress, merely because it is the fashion; and she can lay them both aside with the same ease. Thus you see, my Dear, that this great refinement in the modern method of polite education, is no more than a refinement in vice; it is only a cloak to cover the vicious passions and depraved affections of a bad heart, from which, I pray to God, that you may ever be kept free.

In a word, my Dear, (for I must repeat it to you again) the only way to have a modest look, a modest gait, or a modest behaviour in general, is to have a modest mind. Without this, all the formality, gravity, and grimace in the world, will signify nothing; for, tho' by this means you may be able to impose upon the thoughtless and ignorant, yet the sensible and judicious observer will always see thro' the mask, and perhaps but despise you the more for your hypocritical solemnity.

lemnity. But, my Dear, do not mistake me. While I advise you to be modest, I do not advise you to be sheepish and bashful; far from it. Modesty and sheepishness, however alike they may be in appearance, are as different in their nature, as any two things can well be. A modest person will not talk too much or too high in company, because she knows it is improper: a sheepish person will hardly talk at all, or at least not so as to be understood, because she is afraid. A modest person looks with a decent assurance: a sheepish one is abashed, and blushes at she don't know what. A modest person will never contradict the general taste of the company, unless it be inconsistent with decency and good-manners: a sheepish person will hardly contradict it, even when it is. The one acts from principle, the other from mere instinct: the one is guided by the rules of right reason, and therefore is consistent in her conduct: the other is guided by no rules at all, and consequently has no uniformity of character.

This sheepishness naturally leads to, and commonly ends in, a kind of false modesty, which is such an extreme degree of complaisance, such a yielding softness of nature, as is not able to refuse any thing. A person of this character has no choice of her own: she resigns her own judgment, and is content to be directed by the judgment, or rather by the humour and caprice, of other people. When any thing is proposed, she never examines whether it be reasonable, but only whether it be fashionable; and if it is, she is satisfied: she asks no more: she will comply with it, let the consequence be what it will. She

is ashamed to refuse any thing that is fashionable, however vicious; or to do any thing that is unfashionable, however virtuous. Should it ever become unfashionable to go to church, to be obedient to parents, or even to observe the rules of modesty, it is ten to one but she would be ashamed to perform any of these duties; so that, from an excess of modesty, she perhaps might be tempted to violate the laws of modesty itself.

But, my Dear, this is not modesty; it is weakness. Modesty does not consist in following the fashion, but in following reason; not in complying with the humour of the company in every instance, but only in as far as is consistent with virtue and good manners. If you go by any other rule, you can never be sure of being in the right, but you will always be in danger of being in the wrong; and if you should happen to go right by chance, you are more obliged to the virtue of your companions, than to your own prudence; for had they been wicked enough to have led you astray, you would have been foolish enough to have followed them.

Let me therefore advise you, my dear Sophy, carefully to guard against false modesty, which is one of the greatest enemies of virtue, and perhaps has betrayed young people into as many vices as the most abandoned impudence. Never be so extremely modest as to comply with any thing that is bad, how much soever it may be in vogue; nor ever be ashamed to follow what is good, however singular and uncommon.

True modesty, my Dear, is meant to be the preserver, not the betrayer of your virtue: it will be a kind of guard and protection to your chas-

chastity ; it will secure you from the rudeness and impertinence of the impudent and abandoned part of the other sex. There is such a dignity and majesty in a modest behaviour, as never fails to command respect ; it confounds and abashes even the most profligate, and makes them either ashamed or afraid of giving vent to their low and obscene ribaldry, when they are sure it will be received with a blush or a frown, with contempt or aversion.

But if once a young woman is so foolish as to throw off this virgin delicacy, this ornament of her sex ; if once she accustom her ears to hear, or her tongue to utter indecent and immodest language : she may then expect to be insulted and affronted by every rake she meets. Every abandoned fellow will then think he has a right to say or do whatever he pleases in her company, and that she, who has so little regard for modesty in her conversation, has as little in her actions.

A thousand schemes will then be formed, a thousand snares will then be laid to betray and ruin her virtue ; and if amidst all these secret plots and open assaults, she can preserve it pure and untainted, she must be doubly virtuous indeed ; at least she must be possessed of more firmness of mind, of greater resolution and perseverance, than most young persons enjoy. And should she even be happy enough to elude all the snares, and to repel all the assaults of the licentious and abandoned, yet they will never be brought to entertain a good opinion of her virtue. They will think that she acts not from a love to virtue itself, but from pride, interest, convenience, or  
some



some other motive. And therefore should she be able to maintain her innocence for a while, still she will be in perpetual danger of losing it: for so long as she continues to be immodest, they will continue to be importunate; nor will they ever be persuaded to give over their attempts on her chastity, till she think proper to reform her conduct.

But, my Dear, from all these dangers, snares, and temptations, you may easily preserve yourself, by a strict observance of the rules of modesty; by never allowing a single expression to be dropt in your company, that has the least appearance of obscenity, without testifying your dislike and disapprobation. If you observe this maxim invariably, you will never be exposed to any insults or affronts; for he must be an impudent fellow indeed, or (what perhaps these coxcombs will think a greater disgrace) he must be a stupid fellow, that presumes to take greater liberties, where he sees even the very least are denied him.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to recommend to you a stiff, formal, and precise behaviour; no: this is not modesty; it is prudery, which is as far removed from modesty on the one hand, as coquetry is on the other. Modesty does not need any foreign gloss to set it off: it appears most amiable in its own native colours. The prude affects an appearance of more modesty than she really has: the coquette affects an appearance of less. The former will not probably gain credit: the latter certainly will. The prude will not be believed to possess so much modesty as she pretends to, perhaps not even so much as she

she actually has: the coquette will readily be allowed to have no more than she seems, and possibly even less. Since she is so very anxious to convince the world, that she has little regard for modesty, the world, if she pleases, will be so complaisant, as to believe that she has none at all; whereas they will punish the presumption of the prude, for putting on the appearance of more modesty than she has, by even suspecting the reality of what she actually possesses. The prude is so extremely nice and delicate, that she is offended at every thing: the coquette is so very easy and indifferent, that she is offended at nothing. The prude startles at the most innocent expressions, as rude and indelicate: the coquette hears what are really the most rude and indecent, without any concern. The prude has frequently a grave and demure look, when her heart is light and chearful: the coquette has frequently a gay and sprightly countenance, when her heart is heavy and sorrowful. The prude is often silent, when she ought to speak: the coquette often speaks when she ought to be silent. The prude frequently stays at home, when her heart is at the play or opera: the coquette frequently goes to the play or opera, when her heart is at home. In a word, the prude studies to be singular; the coquette, to be fashionable: the former wants to pass for a lady of the most rigid virtue; the latter for an agreeable companion. The prude despises the coquette as a giddy fool: the coquette laughs at the prude as a conceited hypocrite; and the lady of true modesty pities them both, as well-meaning, perhaps, but mistaken creatures. And objects of pity they certainly

tainly are; for their error proceeds rather from the weakness of their heads than the badness of their hearts.

The one imagines, that a prude is the most ridiculous character in the world, and that therefore the farther she is from it, so much the better: the other thinks the character of a coquette still more contemptible, and endeavours to shun it with the same care. Hence the one naturally becomes a coquette, and the other a prude, not so much from a love to the character they have assumed, as from a hatred to the character they have avoided. Thus, like all fools, while they fly from one vice, they run into its opposite, never remembering, that, in this, as in most other cases, virtue lies in the *golden mean*; that modesty is the middle point between coquetry and prudery, both of which are equally ridiculous and contemptible.

But, my Dear, tho' the prude and the coquette be characters equally ridiculous, still, it must be acknowledged, they are not equally dangerous. The prude has at least the appearance of modesty; but the coquette has not even that: and tho' there may be an appearance of virtue, where there is no reality; yet 'tis hardly possible there can be any reality where there is no appearance, or (what is worse) where there is an appearance of vice: at least the world will always judge so, because it is only by appearances they can judge.

Hence it is, that a prude frequently preserves her reputation, after having lost her innocence; whilst a coquette sometimes preserves her innocence after she has lost her reputation. Besides,  
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the coquette is exposed to many temptations, from which the prude is, in a great measure, free. The behaviour of the prude keeps the men at a proper distance; the behaviour of the coquette admits, and even invites them to improper familiarities; and how very dangerous these familiarities are, is more easily conceived than expressed: indeed it is from this quarter that our greatest danger arises, as perhaps I may take occasion to show you in some other letter.

But, tho' the prude be exposed to fewer dangers than the coquette, still she is exposed to some, and to many more than she would be, were she but simply and unaffectedly modest. For, as the world sees that her modesty is partly counterfeit, they will be apt to conclude that it is entirely so, and that it is assumed only to save appearances; and, upon this supposition, many attempts will be made on her virtue, which never would have been made, but for her prudery and affectation. And, from a general review of the history of our sex, I imagine, it will appear, that the arts of designing and deceitful men have ruined as many prudes as coquettes; and that almost all those who have been thus ruined, have been remarkable for one or other of these foibles.

Let me therefore advise you, my dear Sophy, carefully to shun both these characters, as they are not only ridiculous, but (what is still worse) as they are dangerous. Never affect an appearance of greater gaiety on the one hand, nor of greater solemnity on the other, than true and unaffected modesty requires. Endeavour to possess your mind with a deep sense and a sincere  
love



love of this virtue, and then look and act as nature directs. This, in my opinion, is the only infallible method of having a modest deportment. Without this, indeed, your behaviour may be composed, sedate, formal, ceremonious, and what not? But it can never be truly and unaffectedly modest.

Hitherto, my Dear, I have chiefly considered modesty as it is opposed to impudence: I should now come to consider it as it is opposed to pride, in which view it more properly goes by the name of humility; but this I must reserve for the subject of another letter. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

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### LETTER XXXVII.

My dear SOPHY,

**I**N my last letter, you know I endeavoured, in the best manner I could, to explain to you the nature of modesty, as it is opposed to impudence, and to recommend the practice of it by such arguments as, I thought were most adapted to your capacity. In this I shall consider it, as it is opposed to pride. Modesty, my Dear, considered

sidered in this light, consists in entertaining a just opinion of our own sense, knowledge, wit, beauty, rank and fortune: in a word, of our own abilities, endowments, and qualifications, whatever they are. I say, in entertaining a just opinion; for modesty no more requires us to think worse of ourselves than we deserve, than it allows us to think better. Nor would there be less danger in the one case than in the other.

For instance; were you to be so extremely modest, or rather indeed so extremely foolish, as to imagine, that you have less sense than miss Maynard, and therefore allow yourself to be directed by her in every thing, you plainly see the consequence; you would be led into a thousand errors, mistakes, and prejudices, from which your own good sense, did you exert it, would entirely keep you free. On the other hand, were you to be so very conceited as vainly to imagine, that you have more sense than your aunt or me, and consequently to disregard all our admonitions, and blindly to follow your own humour, what do you think, my Dear, would become of you? Into how many faults, crimes, and vices, you might then possibly fall, I leave yourself to judge.

However uncommon the first of these errors may appear, yet I have known several young ladies who have run into it, and who have paid dearly for their folly.

You know miss Bouverie; nature has blessed her with as much good sense, as falls to the share of most young ladies, had she but courage enough to use it, which indeed till of late she never had. For a long time, she was so extremely timorous  
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and diffident, that she never dared to form an opinion of her own, but was content to be led by the opinions of other people. Some years ago, she unhappily contracted an intimate acquaintance with lady Turner, whose mind is universally allowed to be a medley of prejudices, and her conduct a groupe of inconsistencies. From her the poor young creature imbibed so many foolish conceits, so many whimsical notions, as rendered her behaviour perfectly ridiculous, and which, had she but opened her eyes, and ventured to think for herself, she would have rejected with disdain; but the truth is, she never once thought of the matter, nor ever conceived that she had a right to think for herself in any thing. At last her friends, apprehensive of the consequences, recalled her into the country, where they lectured her so severely, that, by meer dint of argument, they awakened her from her lethargy; and now, like one aroused from a dream, she wonders where she has been, or what she has been doing, and is endeavouring to divest herself of her prejudices as fast as she can, tho' I think, 'tis ten to one, if some one or other of them does not stick to her as long as she lives.

Thus from an excess of false modesty, or rather of sheepish diffidence, this unfortunate young lady has thrown away some of the best years of her life. Instead of learning such wise maxims, as might have been of use to her in her future conduct, she has been learning such ridiculous prejudices, as perhaps the whole remaining part of her life will hardly be sufficient to unlearn.

Let

## THE POLITE LADY. 189

Let me therefore advise you, my dear Sophy, now that you are arrived at the years of discretion, never to be so very foolish as to resign your own judgment to the judgment of any person whatever. Never entertain such a mean opinion of your own sense, nor such a high opinion of the sense of other people, as to comply with any thing, without understanding the reason of it. You know I have never treated you in this manner myself. Ever since you was capable to distinguish right from wrong, I have never desired you to do any one thing without giving you a reason for it; and if your mother has always condescended to give you a reason, you have certainly a right to expect the same favour from every body else. Perhaps some people may be apt to think, that this is a very odd and unaccountable way of proceeding; and that absolute and peremptory commands on the part of the parent, and blind and implicit obedience on the part of the child, is a much safer and a much shorter method. But every one to their own choice; this is my way, and I think it the best. I have always used you in the same manner, in which I would wish to be used myself, were I in your condition, and in which, indeed, I was used when I was in your condition. As you are a reasonable creature, I have always treated you as such; and those parents, who follow the other method, would do well to consider, whether it be so very safe as they imagine, to treat reasonable creatures, as if they had no reason at all; and whether every time the reason is thus overruled without being convinced, it is not thereby rendered



rendered so much the weaker, and less capable of exerting itself on future occasions.

But, my Dear, the greatest danger does not arise from this quarter. Tho' there are some young ladies that fall into this error, yet, comparatively speaking, there are very few: for one that errs from an excess of modesty, there are thousands who err from an excess of pride; and, if you are not greatly altered within these few years, I imagine you are much more inclined to the latter than the former of these vices.

Pride, my Dear, consists in having a high opinion of ourselves, in over-rating our own abilities, and in looking down upon the rest of the world with contempt and disdain; tho', indeed, the world never fails to repay us in our own coin, and, for the most part, with interest too: for I never yet knew any person despise and condemn the world, but the world were always sure to despise and condemn her as much, and perhaps a great deal more.

Nor, indeed, do I think it can well be otherwise; for, if I may be allowed to judge of the dispositions of other people from what I experience in my own breast, I should imagine, that of all the passions, there is no one so apt to excite the same feeling in the mind of the beholder, as that of contempt and disdain. We can behold a person inspired with anger, rage, hatred, or malice, against us, without having our minds greatly affected, or, at least, not affected with any of these particular passions: but we cannot possibly behold any one looking down upon us with an air of contempt and disdain, without feeling the same passion immediately awakened

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ed in our own breasts, without contemning and despising her as heartily in our turn. To account for this disposition of the human mind, is none of my business, nor indeed is it in my power: that I leave to the philosophers, whose province it is: but the fact, I think, is certain, and I have only mentioned it as a caution to all proud, haughty, and supercilious young ladies: 'tis a memorandum, which they would do well to write down in their pocket-books, and consult every morning, as carefully and as duly as they do their glasses. So much for pride in general.

Now, my Dear, allow me to ask you, in particular, what it is you have to be proud of. Is it your beauty? This indeed is commonly the first, and, what is still more surprising, it is frequently the last thing, upon which the foolish part of our sex pique themselves. If a child has but an easy shape and a tolerable complexion, it is ten to one but the coaxing nurse, the artful maid, or the fond parents, soon flatter her into an opinion, that she is mighty pretty and handsome; and thus you shall see the poor young thing mincing about, as prim and precise, as if she were a young lady of twenty; and all this forsooth, because she is a beauty, tho' tis more than probable that the pretty creature has not the least idea of what is meant by a beauty. And having her mind so early tainted with this prejudice, 'tis odds but it stick to her during her whole life. Being accustomed, at the age of five or six, to consider herself as a beauty, she will possibly continue to view herself in the same light, even at the age of fifty or sixty. As she was told that she was handsome before she knew it herself, she will  
probably

probably think she is so, after all the rest of the world have, for a long time, been of a different opinion. Nor in this is there any thing strange; for being taught to regard beauty as the principal, and perhaps the only, recommendation of a woman, she has not been at pains to acquire any other qualification: and as this is the only one she possesses, no wonder that she endeavours to retain it, or, at least, to think she retains it, as long as she can.

The truth is, my Dear, a mere beauty is one of the most insignificant characters in the world, and, if she is proud and haughty into the bargain, she is perfectly ridiculous and contemptible, because she is proud of that, which in effect, she does not possess, and which indeed it is absolutely impossible she can possess; for I will venture to affirm, that pride and beauty cannot meet in the same person. A proud beauty! Why, my Dear, this is just such another contradiction, as if you would say a pretty hump-back: a proud look and a beautiful face are every whit as inconsistent as a crooked back and an elegant shape. For, suppose that pride should not destroy the regularity of your features or the fineness of your complexion; tho', in fact, if it is habitually indulged, it will, in time, destroy both the one and the other: but suppose it should not, what then, my Dear? Are regular features and a fine complexion the sole ingredients of beauty? Do these two constitute this amiable quality? That they do not, I have endeavoured to shew you in a former letter. These indeed are necessary, but these are not sufficient: something more is wanting, and something more essential

sential too, to wit, the graceful air and the *speaking* mien, a look expressive of modesty, love, pity, compassion, in a word, of all the kind and tender affections. This is the life, 'tis the soul of beauty; the others are only its body. This, with very indifferent features and complexion, will warm the heart, and engage the affection of the beholder; but the finest features and complexion, without this, will, at best, but catch the eye, and excite a foolish wonder and admiration.

Hence it is, that your mere beauties, as they are falsely called, (for in reality, they are no beauties at all) frequently remain unmarried all their life long; whereas those who are possessed of this more excellent part, this soul of beauty, seldom or never live single. Hence too it is, that the former, when they happen to be married, are almost always unhappy: and indeed, how can they possibly be otherwise? for being possessed of no sense nor virtue themselves, they are likely to be courted only by persons of the same character; and a happy marriage, without sense or virtue in either of the parties, would be such a miracle, as the world never saw. On the contrary, the latter hardly ever fail of being happy in a married state, because, being sensible and virtuous themselves, and commonly joined with those who are so, they cannot well be other than happy.

Now, my Dear, if beauty consist chiefly in a mild and gentle aspect, in a look expressive of all the kind and tender affections, then pride, which is one of the most odious dispositions, and is entirely destructive of these kind and tender



affections, must, of course, be inconsistent with beauty; so that, you plainly see, 'tis absolutely impossible for a proud person to be beautiful.

But were it otherwise; were it even possible for a young lady to assume a proud and haughty air without destroying her beauty, still I should be glad to know what good purpose it can serve, or what she can gain by such a behaviour. Does she think, by this means, to attract the eyes, and engage the hearts, of the male sex? If she does, I am afraid she will find herself greatly disappointed, and that she has taken the wrong method; for, if I may believe your papa, no man of sense and spirit will flatter her vanity so much, as to favour her with the least mark of his notice or regard. On the contrary, he assures me, that, when he was a student of the Inner Temple, he and all the sensible part of his acquaintance laid it down as a fixed maxim, to pass by every lady of this character with an averted look; and that he believes, all men of real merit will ever behave in the same manner. Hence it appears, that a proud beauty, instead of recommending herself to the esteem, only exposes herself to the contempt of the world.

But perhaps, my Dear, your pride is founded on something else: perhaps you are proud of your rank and fortune. In these respects, indeed, Providence has been very kind to you; for, tho' you are not placed in one of the highest stations of life, yet you are far exalted above the lowest. But why proud of that which you had no hand in procuring? There seems to be some excuse, at least, for valuing ourselves on account of those qualifications, which are of our own acquiring; such

such as our abilities in writing, cyphering, music, and the like; tho' even of these, it will appear upon a closer examination, we have no just reason to be vain; but to be proud of that which we possess, whether we will or no, is little less than a contradiction.

Besides, my Dear, suppose it were allowable for you to be proud of your rank and fortune, still who is obliged to bear the insolence of your pride and haughtiness? Not your superiors surely, for they are your betters; not your equals, for they are as good as yourself. If therefore it be any body at all, it must be your inferiors. But if these people have no immediate dependance upon you, why should they be condemned to submit to this mortification? What is it to them, whether you are the daughter of a duke or a knight, of an earl or an esquire? Whether your fortune be ten thousand or only ten hundred pounds? Because you may happen to be high born and well proportioned, are they, on that account, to be insulted with your lofty and supercilious airs? No, my Dear, they are not; and, what is more, believe me, they will not. For, if you take but the trouble to observe the looks of those, whom you treat in this manner, you will always find, that, instead of admiring you, as perhaps you might fondly expect, they despise and hate you most heartily. And, in my opinion, they act very wisely; for as they derive no advantage from your superior rank and fortune, why should they suffer any mortification from your pride and arrogance.

But suppose they did derive some advantage; suppose they were even your menial servants; is

that a sufficient reason, do you think, for behaving to them with pride and stateliness? Or will such a behaviour make them more submissive and obedient? Far, very far from it. Pride, my Dear, can never produce any other effect, than to render the person infected with it ridiculous and contemptible. I own, indeed, that there is a certain dignity of character to be maintained in the presence of servants; because in this case, at least, the common saying will generally hold true, to wit, *that too great familiarity breeds contempt*: but I affirm, at the same time, that pride differs as much from dignity, as a monkey does from a man; the one is but an imitation, and a very sorry imitation, of the other. Dignity of character will never allow us to do any thing unworthy of ourselves; pride is always prompting us to do every thing that may remind others of their inferiority; and how much soever your servants may be inferior to you, yet it is a truth, which they don't like to have always sounding in their ears; 'tis rather their part to acknowledge it, than yours to assert it; nor should you ever assert it, except when they seem to forget their proper distance; and even then you may do it in so soft and gentle a manner, as to shew that you act not from pride, but from a regard to decency and decorum.

Thus, you see, my Dear, that neither the highest rank, nor the greatest fortune, can be a just foundation of pride; and whenever you find yourself inclined to treat your inferiors with contempt and disdain, let me advise you to reflect how you would bear such treatment from your superiors; and if you think you could not brook  
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the latter, then you must take care never to be guilty of the former; for in this, as in every thing else, you ought always to observe the *golden rule, of doing to others as you would have them do to you, were you in their circumstances and they in yours.*

Let me now ask you, my dear Sophy, in the next place, what else you have to be proud of? Is it your sense, wit, or knowledge? Of these, indeed, you possess as large a share as most young ladies of your age. But what then? To whom are you indebted for these qualifications? Think with yourself, my Dear, and you will find that your sense and wit you have received from heaven, your knowledge, in a great measure, from your instructors; and to be proud of what you have received from others, is certainly a very poor and mean-spirited kind of pride.

Besides, my Dear, to be proud of your sense, is a plain proof that you possess but a very inconsiderable share of that excellent quality, one of the highest attainments of which is, to betray no consciousness of it in your words or actions, at least, not so much as to give pain and uneasiness to those about you. To be proud of your knowledge, is a shrewd sign of your ignorance. She, whose knowledge is very confined, vainly imagines that she knows all that can be known; but she, whose knowledge is more extensive, is fully convinced that there is more to be known than she has yet learned, or indeed than ever she can learn. Hence it is that the foolish and the ignorant are generally proud, positive, and conceited; whereas the sensible and the learned are, for the most part, modest, humble and diffident. As, there-



therefore, my dear Sophy, you would wish to avoid the first of these characters, and to acquire the last, you must take care never to be proud of your sense and knowledge; for the moment you begin to be so, the world will strip you even of the merit of what you really have, and despise you for a vain and empty fool.

In any event, an over-weening opinion of your own abilities will always make you a disagreeable companion, as it will naturally prompt you to treat your friends with such an air of superiority, as, you may be assured, they will not patiently bear. For those, who have less sense and knowledge than you, may, notwithstanding, have sensibility enough to feel, and spirit enough to resent, any affront you offer them. If you deliver your sentiments with modesty and diffidence, they will listen to you with attention, and pay you all that respect and deference, which is due to your superior knowledge; but if, on the contrary, you behave in a haughty and insolent manner, they will forget your real merit, and condemn you for your intolerable pride and arrogance. In a word, there is not, in nature, a more ridiculous and contemptible character, than a proud and haughty person with a small stock of knowledge, except she who is proud and haughty without any knowledge at all.

Let me, therefore, persuade you, dear Sophy, never to be so proud of your own abilities, as to upbraid others with their weakness; for such a conduct cannot possibly do them any good, but will certainly do you a great deal of harm, as it will expose you to the contempt and derision of all the world. And, if you make no other use  
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of your superior sense and knowledge, than to laugh at the ignorance and folly of your companions, it surely would have been much better for them, and perhaps as well for yourself, had you been endued with a less share of these excellent qualities.

After what I have said, my Dear, concerning the folly of pride and insolence, I hope I need not spend much time in proving the still greater folly of vanity and ostentation. If you ought not to be proud of your beauty, rank, fortune, sense, wit, or knowledge, you ought still less to be vain of your fine cloaths, your splendid equipage, or any other baubles and gew-gaws of the like nature. There is something in this kind of pride or vanity so truly contemptible, that it is surprising how any reasonable creature can be guilty of it. And yet, contemptible as it is, such is the weakness of human nature in general, and of our sex in particular, that there is no one vice into which we are more apt to run.

There is miss Greville: she never gets a new dress, but it is like to turn her brain. She appeared last night at Ranelagh, in a gown of a charming colour, and a most elegant fashion; but the misfortune was, that it so entirely engrossed the poor young creature's attention, that she seemed to employ her whole time in contemplating her dress, and observing whether others were not doing the same. Miss Mildmay is a very good kind of girl: she is, for the most part, sufficiently civil and complaisant to all her acquaintance; but when she is admitted into the company of her superiors, and especially when she gets into lady Langham's gilt chariot, she becomes

becomes so extremely short-sighted, or, which is the same thing, so extremely vain, that she does not know any body that is not better than herself. These, my Dear, and many other characters of the like nature, which I might easily draw, are so very ridiculous, that, I dare say, the bare mention of them is sufficient to deter you from falling into the same errors.

To conclude, my Dear, let you be possessed of beauty, rank, fortune, sense, wit, or knowledge, in ever so high a degree; be your dress ever so rich, or your equipage ever so grand; let your qualifications, natural or acquired, be as considerable as they will; still you must take care never to insult or despise those who are inferior to you in all or any of these respects: and, if you faithfully observe this rule, you will never incur the imputation of pride and vanity. Your papa, your brothers and sisters join me, in wishing you all manner of happiness. I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T-

## LETTER XXXVIII.

My dear SOPHY,

**I** AM glad to hear, by a letter I have just received from your aunt, that you are in good health: but am sorry, at the same time, to be informed, that you are too subject to a weakness, from which I thought you had been as free as any young lady in England: the weakness I mean is anger. She says, you are so very warm and passionate, that you are apt to take fire at every little affront that is offered, and every trifling injury that is done you.

Far be it from me, my Dear, to advise you to put up with affronts or injuries from any person whatever; but I would have you to consider seriously, whether anger be the most effectual means of redressing the wrongs you may have already sustained, or preventing the like insults for the future. The former purpose surely it can never serve, because it will disturb and discompose your mind, and render it utterly incapable of listening to the dictates of reason, without which you can never do any thing that is wise and prudent; and it will be so far from producing the latter effect, that, instead of securing you from, it will only expose you the more to, the same bad treatment. For every person, who has a mind to teaze and torment you, will take the advantage of your hot and fiery disposition, to inflame your anger, and put you in a passion; and, when they have done so, they will stand by,



laughing at your folly, and enjoying the fiend-like pleasure of seeing a fellow-creature miserable. And what a mean, what a wretched, what a pitiful condition is this, to lie at the mercy of every one that can say an ill-natured thing, or do an ill-bred action? This is to put your happiness entirely in the power of others, which is placing it upon a very sandy foundation indeed.

In a word, anger can never have any other effect, than to render the angry person herself unhappy. To be angry, is to revenge on ourselves the injuries we receive from others, which is such an extreme degree of folly, as, one would think, no-body of common sense could possibly be guilty of. Would it not be better to behave, in such cases, with a real, or, at least, a seeming indifference; to tell the injurious person, that you are not insensible of the affront she meant to offer you; but that you have too great a regard for the peace of your own mind and the dignity of your own character, to fall into a passion on that account; and that you are fully determined, by breaking off all further correspondence, never to give her another opportunity of treating you in the same manner?

Besides, my Dear, you ought to consider with yourself, whether the affronts and injuries, which are so apt to inflame your anger, be real, or imaginary; for some people are so very ingenious in this art of *self-tormenting*, that they will burst into a passion, not only for the slightest reasons, but frequently for no reason at all. They resent affronts that never were offered, they revenge injuries that never were done.

Mrs.

Mrs. Martin, who is one of this choleric complexion, has, to my knowledge, abandoned some of her best friends for not speaking to her at the play, when, in fact, they were not there, and dismissed some of her most faithful servants, for not performing what it was impossible for any human creature to perform in their circumstances. 'Tis in vain for the friend or the servant to remonstrate; she will hear no apology; their excuse, she says, would be worse than their crime; she believes, nay she is certain, she is positive they are in the wrong; and if she thinks they are so, 'tis the same thing to her at least, as if they were so in reality: should she take it in her head to affirm that two and two are equal to five, no-body must presume to contradict her: if they do, she will make them smart severely for their presumption; for the misfortune is, that your passionate people are always proud and conceited: their passion makes them fall into errors, and their pride will not allow them to be undeceived. The truth is: a passionate person, in one of her frantic fits, will talk and act as unreasonably as any lunatic in Bedlam, thereby verifying the old proverb, that *anger is a short madness*.

Let me entreat you, my dear Sophy, to consider, in the next place, how very indecent and unbecoming such a behaviour is; how utterly inconsistent with all the rules of politeness and good-breeding. 'Tis hardly excusable even in the very meanest and lowest of the vulgar; but in a lady of a genteel education 'tis absolutely intolerable. It was a custom among the ancient Greeks (if I am not mistaken) to intoxicate their  
slaves

slaves with liquor, and then expose them to the view of their young men, in order to inspire them with a detestation of drunkenness. In like manner, my Dear, were you to behold the oyster-women in Billingsgate, or the orange-wenchs in Covent-Garden, scolding and bawling, in their violent transports of passion, you would, I dare say, conceive such an utter hatred and abhorrence of anger, as would effectually prevent you from ever giving way to it for the future.

'Tis but a poor apology which these lunatics make for themselves, to wit, that, in their sober moods, they are the best natured people in the world. A lion too is a very peaceable creature when his belly is full; but a lion will grow hungry, and a passionate person will become peevish; and then I would no more put my happiness in the power of the latter, than I would expose my life to the mercy of the former. Besides, let them be as kind and good-natured as they will, still it is certain, that they frequently do more mischief in an hour, than they can repair in a year, or even during their whole life. As therefore, my dear Sophy, you value the peace of your own mind, and the happiness of those with whom you are connected; as you would wish to acquire and preserve the character of a polite lady, you must take care to check and restrain your propensity to anger, and never allow it to break forth into those sudden and violent transports, which are, at once, so shocking and ridiculous.

After all, my Dear, I don't mean to insinuate, that you should feel no uneasiness when you are injured or affronted; I might as well advise  
you

you to feel no pain when you put your finger in the fire; the one being as impossible as the other, at least, to a person of any sensibility: all I contend for, is, that you should never suffer this uneasiness to carry you beyond the bounds of prudence and discretion. Let it lead you, by all means, to take such measures as may prevent a repetition of the like injuries for the future; but let it never excite you to return these injuries, or to repay the injurious person in her own coin. This is always a sign of the most despicable littleness of mind, of the most contemptible meanness of spirit, and is never allowable, except when it is the only possible method of securing our own peace and tranquillity.

The virtue, directly opposed to anger and peevishness, and which I would recommend to your study and practice, is humanity and good-nature; a certain meekness of temper and gentleness of disposition, that makes us happy in ourselves, and prompts us to communicate happiness to all around us. This temper of mind, it must be confessed, is rather the gift of nature, than the attainment of art. Some people are born with such a happy constitution, such a *milkiness of blood*, that hardly any thing can disturb or discompose them; whilst others are endued with such an extreme degree of sensibility, that almost every trifle offends them. The former may be said to be more happy than the latter, but not more virtuous; for nothing deserves the name of virtue, that is not of our own acquisition. And, however difficult the task may appear, yet this virtue of good-nature may, in some measure, be acquired by every one who will apply herself



herself to the study of it with care and diligence.

For this purpose, let me advise you, my Dear, to maintain a constant chearfulness and alacrity in every part of your behaviour. This is the outward garb and expression of good-nature; and tho' there may be an appearance of this virtue without the reality, yet, by preserving the appearance of it habitually, you may come, at last, to acquire the virtue itself. For 'tis almost impossible for any one to personate a character thro' her whole life, without imbibing, in some degree, the true spirit of the character she represents. Thus, by a kind of innocent deceit, you may not only cheat the world into an opinion of your good-nature; but, what is more, you may even cheat yourself into the actual possession of this amiable quality.

Let me persuade you, my dear Sophy, in the next place, to converse chiefly, and, if possible, only with those who are remarkable for their humanity and good-nature. The great influence of example, I have endeavoured to explain to you in a former letter; and in this particular instance it is as powerful as in any other. Among people of this character, you will hear nothing that can inflame your anger or resentment, but every thing, on the contrary, that can inspire you with chearfulness and good-humour. At any rate, chearfulness will supply the place of good-nature in one respect; for, tho' it will not render you so happy in yourself, yet it will make you equally agreeable to your companions. If you always seem to be good-natured, 'tis the same thing, to them at least, as if you really were so.

Indeed,

Indeed, after you have acquired a tolerable stock of good-nature, perhaps it will not be amiss to put it to the trial, by keeping company sometimes with the peevish and ill-natured, in order to learn whether you can bear injuries or affronts without falling into a passion. For she, whose good-nature is never brought to the test, cannot possibly know whether she is really possessed of it or not. If you can stand the trial, you may then safely conclude, that you have made considerable progress in the acquisition of this virtue; but, if you cannot, you have then just reason to suspect, that your share of it (if, indeed, you have any share of it at all) is very scanty and inconsiderable. But this is an experiment, which you ought not to make too soon nor too frequently: otherwise, instead of being a test to try the strength and reality of your good-nature, it may prove the cause of its ruin and destruction.

In order to excite you, my Dear, to the study and practice of good-nature, let me entreat you to consider the many happy effects which flow from it. It is, as I have already observed, an inexhaustible fund of inward peace and tranquillity. What the wise man says of a good conscience (without which, perhaps, good-nature cannot exist, at least not in its highest perfection) may properly enough be applied to this virtue, to wit, that it is "a continual feast." A person, blessed with this happy temper of mind, possesses within herself a never-failing source of joy and pleasure: she derives happiness from almost every incident and occurrence of life, even from those, which, to the peevish and ill-natured, are the cause of pain and uneasiness. Thus the  
bee

bee imbibes honey from the very same herbs, from which more noxious animals extract venom.

Nor is it only the spring of internal happiness; it is likewise the most effectual means of recommending us to the love and affection of our fellow-creatures. Wit, knowledge, and good-sense, may make us esteemed and respected; but 'tis good-nature, and that alone, which can make us beloved. And, from a general survey of the world, you will find it to hold universally true, that people are more inclined to court and cultivate the friendship of the humane and good-natured, than of the witty, the learned, and the sensible. And, in this respect, they act very wisely: the former communicate what knowledge they have with modesty and diffidence; the latter with pride and haughtiness: the former do it to oblige the company; the latter, to assert their own superiority. In a word, the witty and learned may have many acquaintance, and perhaps some admirers, but few, if any friends; whereas the good-natured have as many friends and well-wishers, as they have acquaintance. Every one that knows them, loves them. Nor, indeed, can it possibly be otherwise; for they who wish well to all the world, must, of consequence, enjoy the good wishes of all the world in their turn.

Miss Astley and miss Lambert are remarkable instances of what I have been saying. Miss Astley is possessed of an uncommon share of wit, sense, and knowledge; but then she is peevish and ill-natured. The consequence of this is, that tho' she is universally admired, she is as  
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universally dreaded. Her friends will not intrust her with their secrets: because these she might betray in a fit of passion: they will not put their happiness in her power; because that she might sacrifice to a witty expression. Miss Lambert, on the contrary, tho' endued with a very moderate degree of sense, wit, or knowledge, is blessed with such a sweet temper and gentle disposition, that she is beloved and caressed by all her acquaintance. She knows the most important secrets of all her friends, because she never disclosed the most trifling secret of any one: they are not afraid to intrust her with their happiness, because they are convinced, that she has the same tender regard for it, as she has for her own.

Besides, my Dear, good-nature is not only a most excellent virtue in itself, but is also the foundation and ground-work of many other virtues; such as pity, compassion, charity, benevolence, politeness and good-manners, of all which I shall give you my sentiments in my next letter. At present I have no more to add, but that I ever am,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T-



## LETTER XXXIX.

My dear SOPHY,

AS I promised in my last letter, I shall now give you my sentiments of those virtues, which I told you were founded in humanity and good-nature. And the first I shall mention, is, pity or compassion. By this, my Dear, I mean that pleasing pain, which every generous mind feels upon seeing a fellow creature in distress. This painful sensation is certainly attended with a very considerable degree of pleasure, when we have it in our power to alleviate the calamities of the unhappy sufferer; and, even when that cannot be done, there is still a mixture of pleasure in it, arising from the consciousness of our own virtuous disposition, and the propensity we feel within ourselves to give assistance, were it in our power: so that perhaps we may venture to affirm, that the pleasure which a humane and good-natured person enjoys, even when incapable of relieving the distressed, is infinitely superior to any happiness, that can be tasted by the cruel and hard-hearted.

In people, indeed, of a very tender heart and delicate constitution, this sympathy is so strong and powerful, that, if we may take their own word for it, they feel a pain in that individual part of the body, in which the miserable object is affected. But whatever may be in this, certain it is, that every person, who has not entirely divested herself of all the finer feelings of humanity  
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(and, I hope, none of our sex are so utterly depraved and corrupted) must have a very uneasy sensation at the sight of a miserable object, and a strong inclination to afford relief and assistance; and with this inclination it is that I would have you to comply in every particular instance: never endeavour to stifle or suppress it; to do so were to offer violence to the dictates of nature, and to disobey the command of God, the author of nature.

But, my Dear, pity is not confined solely to those who are labouring under diseases of the body: it regards such, likewise, as are afflicted with grief and sorrow of mind, whether occasioned by loss of friends or fortune, or by any other cause. With these you ought to sympathize and condole: their pain you ought to soothe and mitigate: to them you should administer all the comfort and consolation you can. This is one of the best and most important offices of friendship; but such is the refinement, shall I say, or rather corruption of modern manners, that it is a good office, which few friends desire to receive; and fewer still chuse to perform.

A lady, now-a-days, upon the loss of a near relation, shuts herself up in her own house, perhaps confines herself to her own room, where she remains inaccessible to all her friends, till she has mourned out the full time, which the forms of ceremony prescribe; and then returns into the world as gay and chearful as ever: so that, unless from her weeds, you shall not be able to judge whether she has been mourning or not. I don't blame her for keeping her room on these occasions; no: good sense, as well as decency, requires

requires it ; but what I find fault with is, her not giving her friends an opportunity of performing one of the most essential duties of friendship, namely, that of soothing and assuaging her grief, and administering comfort to her in her affliction. Does she think that she is comfortless, and that all the consolations of her friends, like fuel added to the flame, would only tend to make her sorrow more severe and insupportable, by recalling to her mind the remembrance of the fond parent, or affectionate sister, whom she has lost ? At first perhaps this might be the case : the first transports of passion are frequently so violent and ungovernable, that no arguments are sufficient to moderate or restrain them. But these transports cannot last long : their own violence will soon exhaust them ; and when once they are over, she certainly ought to receive the company of her friends, who, by their sensible and judicious conversation, may show her the danger, the folly, and even impiety of immoderate grief, and, by their soft and gentle persuasion, may bring her back to her former calmness and tranquillity of mind. If she refuses to comply with this, whatever she may think herself, or whatever she would have the world to think, she may depend upon it, that she is more influenced by a regard to form and fashion, than by the dictates of sound reason and common sense.

But however desirous a lady may be to receive comfort and consolation from her friends, yet there are few, if any, friends to be found, who will undertake the unpleasing, as they think, tho' I should rather call it the pleasing, task. For, what can be more pleasing than to mingle the  
tears

tears of pity and compassion with those of the wretched and miserable ; to sympathize and console with them in their sorrow and affliction ; and to pour the balm of comfort in their aching and bleeding hearts ? There is something in these tender offices of friendship infinitely more ravishing and transporting than any thing that can be enjoyed even in the very height of prosperity and good fortune. Thus, while we communicate happiness to others, we, at the same time, enjoy it ourselves. Besides, this generous conduct is not only productive of the most exquisite pleasure, but also of the most beneficial effects ; for it naturally tends to humanize and soften the heart, and to render it susceptible of the most fine and delicate feelings. And surely there is no feeling more fine and delicate than that of pity and compassion : 'tis the noblest affection in the human mind ; 'tis the bond and cement of human society ; 'tis the distinguishing characteristic of our sex, and gives an additional grace and beauty to all our other virtues and accomplishments.

It must, therefore, be matter of great surprise to every thinking person, that most women should be so very careful to shun every opportunity of exercising this amiable virtue. What can be the cause of this unreasonable conduct ? Are they afraid of deviating from the fashion and appearing singular. A poor apology indeed ! To be so entirely devoted to the present mode as to follow it, in contradiction to the virtuous feelings of our own hearts, and the dictates of our own consciences, is certainly the most mean and abject kind of slavery. Or, do they think that their hearts are so very tender, that they could not bear



bear the sight of a friend in distress? Let them only try the experiment, and I imagine, they will soon find, that they have been mistaken in their notions: at any rate, it is surely a most absurd way of reasoning to allege, that, because their hearts are extremely tender, they must therefore discover no outward expressions of tenderness at all. Or, finally, are they so very selfish, that they will not take any trouble or concern about the calamities and misfortunes of others? This, I believe, is an excuse, which they will be ashamed to make, and yet I'm afraid, 'tis the only excuse that can be made for them; if, indeed, that may be said to be an excuse, which is rather an aggravation of their crime, as it plainly shews them to be destitute of that generous sympathy and fellow-feeling, which is the very life and soul of friendship. But whatever be the motive that influences these people, let me entreat you, my dear Sophy, to observe a very different, and a more virtuous conduct. Cheerfully embrace every opportunity of exercising your pity and compassion; for, besides the advantages I have mentioned above, it will enable you the better to bear your own misfortunes. By observing how others behave, when oppressed with calamities and afflictions, you will learn how to behave yourself, when placed in the same or the like circumstances.

The next virtue I would recommend to you, my Dear, is charity, which consists in relieving the poor and needy, of whom you will see but too many in the streets and public walks about town. How the number of beggars comes to be so greatly increased, it is not my business to enquire, nor, indeed, is it in my power to explain:

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tho', I must own, I have frequently thought it very unaccountable, that, in a nation so rich as England, and especially in a city so wealthy as London, any people should be reduced to such a low ebb of misery, as not to be able to support themselves, or not to have a title to be supported by the public. Perhaps the laws relating to the poor are not sufficient: perhaps those we have are not strictly enough put in execution: perhaps too our public rulers may think it conducive to the interests of virtue, that some beggars should be allowed to solicit our charity in the streets, as it naturally tends to inspire us with humanity, and to remind us of the uncertain and precarious nature of all worldly pomp and grandeur. But to whatever cause the great numbers of poor may be owing, 'tis your duty to relieve and assist them, as much and as often as you can: never pass by an object of charity without bestowing such an alms as is suitable to your rank and fortune.

'Tis in vain for you to object, that some of these people have brought themselves into this wretched condition, by their own folly and wickedness; and that, therefore, they should be left to suffer the punishment, which is the natural consequence of their crimes. Leave it, my Dear, to the wise Governor of the universe to punish them as he thinks proper: 'tis enough for you that they are poor and needy; that circumstance alone is sufficient to entitle them to your charitable assistance. I own, indeed, that there is a material distinction to be made between persons of this character, and those who have been reduced to poverty by unforeseen and unavoidable accidents. The former are certainly much less  
deserving

deserving of charity than the latter, but still they deserve it; and to excuse ourselves from performing acts of charity by such frivolous pretexts, is perhaps in itself a more heinous crime, than any that can be justly laid to the charge of the unhappy beggars: whilst we fondly think we are expressing our hatred and abhorrence of their vicious conduct, we are, in effect, only seeking a cloak to conceal our own want of charity. Besides, with regard to public beggars, 'tis impossible for you to be informed of the true cause of their poverty unless from themselves; and, if the accounts they give be not improbable and contradictory, you ought to believe them: in any event, you ought to assist them.

But, my Dear, there is still a greater grievance. Among the infinite numbers of poor people with whom our streets are crouded, there are many cheats and impostors. In one place you shall see a woman, who perhaps, never had a child of her own, with two babes in her arms, and two or three by her side, beseeching all christian passengers to have pity on the widow and fatherless. In another you may behold a man, of a sound constitution and in perfect health, endeavouring to move compassion and obtain an alms by counterfeiting all the outward symptoms of the most violent palsy. What then, you'll say, would I have you to do in these and the like cases? Why, my Dear, if you are absolutely certain that they are cheats and impostors, I would be very far from advising you to give them any assistance: to do so were to encourage vice and wickedness, and to throw away upon vile miscreants, what ought to be bestowed upon those  
who

who are really poor and indigent. But this is a circumstance, which I apprehend, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for you to learn with any degree of certainty; and therefore, while the case remains doubtful, I would have you to give them an alms at a venture. If they are cheats, the blame lies not upon you who have acted from a good principle, but upon themselves, who are wicked enough to deceive the public, and upon the civil magistrate, who is careless enough to allow such deceits to pass unpunished. At any rate, 'tis better to relieve twenty impostors than to neglect one real object of charity.

But, my Dear, there is another species of charity, of a less public indeed, but not of a less important nature. There are many poor families, who, with all their labour and industry, are not able to keep themselves above want, and yet are ashamed to supply their wants by begging in public. Some of these, having been reduced to poverty, from a state of plenty and affluence, retain so much of their former delicacy of sentiment, that they are even solicitous to conceal their circumstances from the world, by which means they shut the door, as it were, against all charitable assistance. Some people, perhaps, may be apt to condemn this as an instance of pride and vanity. But, if they injure no-body by it, 'tis certainly a kind of pride that deserves rather to be pitied than condemned. They act more nobly, and, I will venture to say, more virtuously too, than those low-minded and mean-spirited mortals, who are always complaining of their poverty, and are not ashamed to receive



the public charity, tho', in effect, they don't need it.

Here then, my Dear, is a wide and extensive field for the exercise of your charity: here you may shew your generosity not only in what you give, but also in the manner of giving it. Let your charity be always as large as the necessity of the family seems to require, and your own fortune can easily afford; and let it be conveyed in such a manner, as may least offend the delicacy of the receiver. Your grand mamma, I remember, was wont to contribute largely to the support of several poor families in the neighbourhood, without ever letting them know from what hand these liberal contributions came; and, I believe, I could mention some similar instances in my own conduct, were it not that it might favour too much of vanity.

But perhaps, my Dear, you will tell me, that you are not able to give any charity at all: that your income is so very small and inconsiderable, that it is hardly sufficient to defray your own necessary expences.—Necessary expences! pray, my Dear, what do you mean by necessary expences? For, I am afraid, you consider many things as necessary, which are altogether superfluous and unnecessary. Is it necessary, do you think, that you should go to the play, the opera, and other public entertainments, once a week, or even once a month? Is it necessary, that you should give twenty guineas for a gown, eight for a capuchin, three for a head-dress, or two for a fan? Is it necessary, that you should throw away four or five shillings for a coach or chair every time you go a visiting. On the contrary, is it not

not very possible to save something in these, and a thousand other articles of the like nature? Think with yourself, my Dear, and I dare say, you will frankly confess that it is. What now, if, instead of going to the play once a week, you should only go once a month, or if, instead of once a month, you should only go once in two months, and bestow the money thus saved on some poor and indigent families? What if, instead of giving twenty guineas for a gown, you should only give eighteen, and, with the remaining two, clothe some half dozen of fatherless children? What if, in place of throwing away three or four shillings on a coach or chair, you should e'en walk it, when the road is good and the weather fair, and distribute the money among the blind and lame, whom you meet by the way? Will such a conduct, do you think, diminish your happiness. Do, my Dear, but try the experiment for once, and if, after trial, you don't acknowledge that, far from diminishing, it greatly encreases your happiness, I will never bid you try it again. I know the goodness and tenderness of your heart so well, that I am not, in the least, afraid to put the matter upon this footing.

When you go to the play, you behold a company of people, all of them happy, or seemingly happy, and who would have been equally so, whether you had come there or not. But when you bestow the price of your ticket upon a poor and distressed family, you see a number of your fellow-creatures, whose happiness, for the present, depends entirely on you; who consider you as a kind of guardian-angel, sent down from heaven to supply their wants and necessities. At your

approach their sorrowful hearts are filled with joy, their mournful countenances are overspread with smiles: they breathe forth their warmest wishes for your safety and welfare; even the tender babes are taught to lisp out their prayers for your happiness, and to bless the lovely name of their dear Sophy. But, my dear, I feel something more than I can express; for no words are sufficient to describe the heart-felt pleasure, which a generous mind enjoys in the exercise of this god-like virtue of charity; and for my own part, I would prefer one hour thus spent, to whole years of foolish mirth and diversion.

The pleasures of mirth (if indeed they may be called pleasures) are tasteless and insipid, and play only, as it were, on the surface of the mind: the pleasures of charity are ravishing and transporting; they sensibly affect the heart, and penetrate to the very inmost recesses of the soul. The former are fleeting and transitory; the latter are permanent and durable. When I reflect on the charitable actions I performed twenty years ago, I enjoy almost as much pleasure as I did in the very act of performing them; but when I call to mind the many agreeable evenings which I have spent at the play or opera, I feel no pleasure: on the contrary, I feel a certain uneasiness, arising from the consideration of my having thrown away so much time to little or no purpose.

In a word, my dear, there is no article of expence, in which you may not save something to give to the poor, even were your fortune much less than it is: nay, I will take upon me to affirm, that there is no person, who is one degree above a state of absolute beggary, but may and ought



ought to reserve something for the same purpose. This, to be sure, will require a good deal of frugality or œconomy. By the exercise of this virtue, the poorest may be charitable; without it, the richest must be uncharitable. If you live above your fortune, you will be perpetually pinched and straitened in your circumstances, and, in some sense, will be as effectually poor as the beggar who implores your charity in the streets: far from being able to supply the wants of others, you will continually be in want yourself. But if you live within your fortune, you will enjoy all the conveniencies and pleasures of life, with as much elegance and more satisfaction, than you could possibly have done in the former case; and, besides, you will have wherewithal to relieve the necessities of the poor and indigent; a conduct, which, I hope, you will always have the virtue and good-sense to observe.

Another virtue, my dear Sophy, nearly a-kin to the former, and which you ought to cherish and cultivate with equal care, is benevolence, or an universal love and good-will to all your fellow-creatures without exception. For, however distinguished by country, climate, language, or complexion; by difference of religion or politics; by wealth or poverty, or by any other circumstances; we are all the children of the same parent, we are all members of the same family, and therefore should treat one another with the tender affection of brothers and sisters. The black African, the tawny American, and the white European, are equally intitled to our good wishes and friendly assistance. 'Tis of no consequence  
where



where they were born, what language they speak, or what religion they profess; whether they are high or low, rich or poor: 'tis enough that they are human creatures; that alone gives them a claim to our benevolence and good-will.

Nothing, indeed, is more absurd than that narrow and selfish prejudice, which would confine our benevolence within the circle of our own acquaintance, our own country, our own religion, or within any other limits than those of the human kind; and yet, absurd as this prejudice is, there are few but what are tinged with it in a greater or less degree. The men flatter us into an opinion, that the British ladies are the finest women in the world; and we, in return, pay them the compliment of being the bravest men in the universe; and, in, fact, I believe, they are: but surely this can be no reason for despising, and much less for hating, the natives of other countries: to do so is always a sign of a low, illiberal, and ungenerous mind.

The principal thing, that divides the world into so many sects and parties, and is the cause of so much discord and dissension, is a difference of opinion in point of politics and religion. Of the latter of these I may possibly give you my sentiments on some other occasion: and with regard to the former, I shall only observe, that it is a subject entirely above your sphere. I would not willingly resign any of the privileges that properly belong to our sex; but, I hope, I shall have all the sensible part of it on my side, when I affirm that the conduct and management of state affairs is a thing, with which we have no concern. Perhaps our natural abilities are not  
equal

equal to such an arduous task : at any rate, our education, as it is now conducted, is too slight and superficial to render us competent judges of these matters ; and I have always thought it as ridiculous for a woman to put herself in a passion about political disputes, as it would be for a man to spend his time in haranguing upon the colour of a silk, or the water of a diamond. The latter would surely incur the imputation of an empty fop ; and the former, with equal justice, would deserve the character of an impertinent trifler.

Besides, my Dear, our passions are much more keen and violent than those of the other sex, or, which is the same thing, we are less capable to check and restrain them ; and hence it is, that, when we unhappily engage in political contests, we never fail, by our intemperate heat, to blow up the most trifling disputes into open war and hostility. On the contrary, it is our duty to be the peace-makers, and not the incendiaries of the world.

Leaving it, therefore, to the men to contend and dispute about politics as much as they please, I shall endeavour to shew you the absurd and ridiculous nature of those little feuds and animosities, that prevail among our sex, and interrupt the exercise of universal love and benevolence. If any young lady outshines you at a ball or assembly ; if she is more richly and elegantly dressed ; if she has a greater number of admirers ; if she is more respected for her superior sense, wit, learning, and politeness : in a word, if she excels you in any one particular, 'tis odds but you presently begin to regard her with a jealous eye, and to entertain a secret wish that she were less happy

happy and accomplished. And yet 'nothing can be more unreasonable; for were she less happy and accomplished than she is, that would not render you more happy or accomplished than you are: the diminution of her merit would be no addition to yours. If she eclipses you in all public places, it must be by the force of some superior qualities, which, if attainable, you should endeavour to acquire, and for which, if they are not, you should not envy her. If her dress is more rich and costly than yours, perhaps her rank too is higher, and her fortune larger, in which case, instead of envying, you should rather commend her, for wearing a dress suitable to her station; but if she dresses above her rank and fortune, she is more to be pitied for her ridiculous folly, than to be envied for her imaginary happiness. If she is more admired and courted than you, 'tis very likely she deserves it: but suppose she does not, who is to blame? not she surely, but her admirers. If she is more respected for her superior sense, wit, learning, and politeness; then her character becomes a proper object not of your envy, but ambition.

The envious person would reduce others to a level with herself, by lessening their merit, without encreasing her own: the ambitious person endeavours to raise herself to an equality with others, by encreasing her own merit without diminishing theirs. 'Tis true, sense and wit are the gift of nature, and cannot be acquired; but learning and politeness may: and therefore, while you are inferior to her in these, or in any other virtuous and genteel accomplishment, I would not have you to rest satisfied or contented, but,  
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on the contrary, would advise you to exert your utmost abilities in order to obtain them, and render yourself as accomplished as her.

In short, my Dear, envy, in whatever light it is considered, is a most unreasonable passion. Nor is it more unreasonable than it is foolish and impious; for it naturally tends to encrease our own misery, without impairing the happiness of others, and is, at the same time, a tacit condemnation of the conduct of the Almighty, who is the author of all the happiness which his creatures enjoy.

After all, my Dear, were this malevolent spirit confined to our own breasts, and left to ferment and rankle there, we should be less criminal, if not less miserable. But the misfortune is, that it frequently, and indeed almost always, breaks out into open scandal, calumny, and detraction. When once we wish a person ill, we soon begin to think ill of her too; and from thinking ill of any one, 'tis a very natural and easy transition to speak ill of her likewise; and thus a door is opened for all the virulence of slander, obloquy, and defamation. From this vice, you know, I have endeavoured to dissuade you in a former letter. At present, I shall only observe, that to speak ill of others is as imprudent as it is odious; not only as it will provoke them to repay us in our own coin, but also as it is a shrewd sign of our being guilty of the very same crimes, which we lay to their charge. I have seen one lady declaim against proud people with so much vehemence and acrimony, that, at length, all who heard her were fully satisfied that she herself must be one of the number; and I have



have known another inveigh so bitterly against immodest women, as to convince all the ignorant part of the company that she was extremely virtuous, and all the sensible part of it that she was quite the reverse.

Before I conclude, my Dear, let me recommend to you the study and practice of politeness or good manners, which hath such an immediate dependence upon good nature, that it is no other than that virtue reduced into an art. But tho' it be an art, yet perhaps it is impossible to lay down any fixt and invariable rules for the attainment of it. For, if it consist, as it certainly does, in pleasing those with whom we converse, and if the only way to please people be to gratify their particular humours, and if the humours of mankind be as different as their faces, then it should seem to follow, that the rules of good-breeding must be as many and as various as the complexions of men, which are generally allowed to be infinite. The truth is, no person can be well-bred without an equal share of good-sense and good-nature: good sense to distinguish the various tempers of mankind; and good-nature, by which we are prompted to accommodate ourselves to these tempers, as far as the precepts of virtue will permit. Without these two qualifications, a lady may be formal, ceremonious, precise, or what you will, but she can never be truly polite: and she who should treat the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the sprightly and the grave, the reserved and the frank, with the same insipid uniformity of behaviour, would have no more title to the character of a polite lady, than the

the stiff-walking dancing-master has to that of the fine gentleman.

Some people expect to be used with a great deal of form and ceremony, and to these you should show it: others hate every thing that has the least appearance of formality or stiffness, and upon these you should never obtrude it: to be extremely ceremonious to them, is, in effect, to be extremely unpolite. The great secret seems to be to preserve a constant disposition to make all about you happy, and then trust to the immediate suggestions of your own prudence for the most effectual method of doing it; for, should you even mistake with regard to the means, yet, where the intention is evident, you will, in some measure, obtain your end: you will pass, if not for a very polite, at least for a very good-natured lady.

But, my Dear, as I have already mentioned some of the principal rules of politeness in my letter on conversation, and in several others, and as it is an art which may be better learned by practice than precept, I would have you to regulate your conduct, in this respect, by the example of your aunt, who indeed is one of the most polite and well-bred ladies I ever knew; and if you carefully observe and faithfully imitate her manner, you will, in time, become so likewise: which that you may, is the sincere wish of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your affectionate mother,

PORTIA.

L E T.

## LETTER XL.

My dear SOPHY,

**A**S this will probably be the last letter I shall have an opportunity of writing you for some time, I shall employ it in giving you a few directions concerning that most important of all subjects, I mean the subject of religion.

Religion, my Dear, consists in a full conviction and firm belief of the being, perfections, and providence of God, and in the faithful and conscientious discharge of all the duties he hath enjoined us. The arguments for the being of a Deity, are too many and various to come within the compass of a letter; and, besides, to treat them with proper accuracy and judgment, is a task, for which, I confess, I am, by no means, qualified. But in order to supply what I have neither time nor abilities to perform, I would have you to read some of the best books on that subject, such as Fenelon on the Existence, Clarke on the Attributes, and Sherlock on the Providence of God.

With regard to the duties of religion and morality, they are so plain and obvious, as to be easily understood by any person of an ordinary capacity, and so just and reasonable, as to approve themselves to every unprejudiced and impartial mind. These you will find clearly explained, and strongly inculcated, in the sermons of Barrow, Tillotson, Seed, Hoadly, Sherlock, and



and several others. For the evidences of Christianity, Wilkins, Butler, Locke, and Addison will furnish you with unanswerable proofs. All these books, however, I have recommended to your perusal, not with a view to supersede the necessity of studying, but, on the contrary, to enable you the better to understand the holy scriptures, the only infallible rule of our faith and manners, and of which you ought to read a part every day.

As you had the happiness to be born a member of the church of England, I would have you steadily to adhere to it thro' the whole course of your life, and punctually to observe all its forms and ceremonies; which yet are of no further avail, than as they tend to inspire you with an ardent love to God, and an universal benevolence and good-will to all your fellow-creatures. Whilst, therefore, you profess yourself a member of the English church, let me entreat you to entertain a good opinion of, and to cherish a friendly disposition towards all those, who may happen to differ from you in their religious sentiments.

The Christian church is unhappily divided into a variety of different sects, the zealots of which treat one another with such an implacable spirit of resentment, as is directly opposite to the true genius of Christianity: while they endeavour to convince the world that they are more religious than their neighbours, they plainly shew themselves to have no religion at all. Which of all these different sects comes nearest to the truth I will not take upon me to determine: but thus much, I think, I may venture to affirm, that  
good



good people of every sect will be saved, and that the wicked of every sect will be condemned.

In that great and awful day, when you shall be summoned before the impartial Judge of the universe, to give an account of your behaviour, the question will not be, to what sect you belonged, or under what form of church-government you lived; but only how far you acted up to the true spirit of Christianity, in loving the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul and mind, and your neighbour as yourself, and in performing all the duties of a good, pious, and virtuous life. Such a conduct, and such only, can qualify you for an admission into those heavenly mansions, where love and charity, joy and gladness, perpetually reign; and that, after a long and happy life, you may be received into these blissful regions, is the sincere wish and earnest prayer of,

My dear SOPHY,

Your fond and affectionate mother,

PORTIA.



F I N I S.

